

**INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES INTO THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH SYSTEM: PERSPECTIVE OF
THE PIONEER GHANA CONFERENCE.**

BY

RANSFORD OSAFO GYASI

(10701068)

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Ransford Osafo Gyasi, under the supervision of Dr. Lawrence Boakye and Dr. Harry Lawson K. Agbanu, towards the award of M.Phil. Degree in Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana (Legon).

Signature.....

RANSFORD OSAFO GYASI

(STUDENT)

.....18-11-2021

DATE

Signature.....

DR. LAWRENCE BOAKYE

(SUPERVISOR)

.....18-11-2021

DATE

Signature.....

DR. HARRY LAWSON K. AGBANU

(SUPERVISOR)

.....18-11-2021

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear Mum, Christiana Yaa Adutwumwaa. Indeed, without her support, I would have been a drop out. The Lord bless and Keep you, the Lord grant you peace and long life-Amen.

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I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Almighty God for His unflinching support, guidance and opportunity to pursue this course. I wish to assert that the Lord's provision both physically and spiritually has brought me thus far. The Lord's name be praised.

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ABSTRACT

Integration of PWDs into all facets of social life has been a challenging phenomenon the world over. The socio-cultural perceptions and opinions formed around disabilities seem to have contributed to the acceptance challenges that PWDs face in the various social settings. Unfortunately, the social gap between PWDs and the able bodied individuals keeps widening in spite of the Legislative enactments and media promotions. In recent times, numerous advocacy groups including Religious institutions have been engaged in championing the restoration of the dignity of PWDs yet, the challenges of integration PWDs in social activities persist. Among the numerous advocacy groups is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In view of the strong advocacy roles being played by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the research attempted to review the challenges of PWDs in the church settings of the Seventh-day Adventists at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

The study employed the qualitative research methods to review the challenges of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana Conference. The researcher resorted to interviews, observations and focus group discussions to access relevant data for critical analysis and to arrive at a desired conclusion. Furthermore, existing texts relevant to the study were included as the secondary sources.

The study reviewed the involvement challenges of PWDs in Church leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana Conference. Subsequently, the study highlighted on the availability of disability support gadgets and materials, financial support to PWDs and the challenges that structural designs pose in attempts to involve PWDs in church programmes and activities in the local churches of the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Challenges of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and their integration into the social space in Ghana have been among the numerous discussions for decades. This may be due to the fact that disability matters have not been exhaustively dealt with. Numerous advocacy groups have emerged focusing on finding lasting solution to the stigma and marginalization of PWDs, yet these initiatives have not yielded the required results. Baynton argues that:

Disability has been one of the most prevalent justifications for inequality in ...history, and yet it has been rarely studied by historians... Even as the oppressed group fought against inequality, they most often did so by insisting that they were not disabled rather than arguing that disability did not justify inequality.¹

Virginia and Deborah suggest that “assisting PWDs to determine their need and preference for reasonable accommodation is an important function for employment service providers”² and for that matter must be the concern of all. The society needs to refocus to collaborate for lasting solution to the plights of PWDs to encourage social integration.

Disability matters have been tackled extensively and advocates have attempted to secure lasting steps to curtail the stigma on PWDs, yet, the trends have attracted low patronage to some extent. This is in the sense that practically, most societies have ill views on disabilities and thus, affecting their acceptance. On the other hand, the contribution of PWDs in our societies cannot

¹ Dauglas C. Baynton, “Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power” in *The disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017) 17

² Virginia C. Stoffel and Deborah B. Pitt, *Work As Occupation*, in *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health: Vision for Participation*, ed. Catana Brown, (Philadelphia, F.A. Davis Company, 2011) 669.

be underestimated. Undoubtedly, researchers in these areas have focused on researches that gear towards espousing inclusive strategies to foster PWDs into the social environment with proper orientation on disability integration. For instance, Arthur studied on the Political Participation of PWDs in Ghana and examined the extent of implementation of the Disability Act in promoting political inclusion of PWDs. One would ask how these outcomes in disability studies have impacted the Ghanaian political discourses and actions in drawing more PWDs into the political arena.

Many socio-cultural beliefs associate disability with sickness. Ahortor remarks that in “traditional African thought, disability is not good health. In spite of the specific terms for disability in Ghanaian languages, for instance, persons with disabilities are often referred to as ‘sick persons.’”³ Consequently, these have reflected in the level of interest attached to the incorporation of PWDs into the social life in Ghana.

Not until 2006, governmental, social and religious institutions in Ghana had not factored PWDs into their planning hence, they were left on their own to struggle for survival in the social space. However, the national Policy on PWDs came as a relief to aid those in the bracket to find space in the religio-social platforms. “The Persons with Disability Act 715 passed by the Ghanaian Parliament in 2006 compels the social worker to start making provisions to accommodate the needs of disabled persons.”⁴ The Act has an attribution of settling the discourse of integrating PWDs in the Ghanaian societies.

³ West –central Africa Division, General conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church working policy 2008 (Accra: Advent Press), 21.

⁴ Michel Paschal Tchiakpe, The Disability Act of Ghana: Building Accessibility of Visually Impaired Persons in two Districts in the Ashanti Region of Ghana: MedCrave vol 8, issue 1 Modified January 2018, Accessed December 7, 2019 <https://medcraveonline.com>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, a religious organization has been a partner in campaigning against social segregation. As a religious institution, it has a mission “to proclaim to all people (including PWDs) the everlasting gospel in the context of the three Angels’ Message of Revelation 14:6-12”⁵

In the Presentation of the first Angel’s message, the ‘everlasting gospel is to be preached to all irrespective of race, colour, language and health status. The first angel’s message in Revelation

14:6 states:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6)

However, a critical assessment of the contributions in terms of reaching out to all people (including PWDs) needs deeper consideration. This is because there seem to be less attention on the part of churches in attracting PWDs with their messages for healthy religio-social bonds. The expectation required is that these churches must set the pace to reach out to PWDs as their initial steps to clear the doubt of religio-social partitionism. This must be part of their core mandate since it reduces the notion of disintegration. Thus, churches are to set the tone in the creation of enabling social environment to win or attract PWDs to complement the national effort in engaging stakeholder consultation to relieve PWDs from the arena of social stigma.

⁵ Godson Ahorator, “Exploring the Intersection of Religion, Health and Disability in the Ghanaian Experience” in *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, ed. George Ossom- Batsa (Accra: Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana), 107.

In a recent observation at the annual camp-meeting schedules of the Seventh-day Adventist church, little was identified in relation to the involvement of PWDs in the camp-meeting programs and activities. Interestingly, there were countable number of PWDs in attendance and that prompted the investigation as to why PWDs are readily not seen in large numbers in regular church platforms at Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Furthermore, few PWDs were identified as being involved in church leadership positions. More so, a stern investigation unfolded that, most of the churches in Pioneer Ghana Conference have unfriendly worship environments in terms of structural designs and disability gadgets. These suggested that most of the church environments at Pioneer Ghana Conference were not adequately prepared to receive PWDs.

These observations have prompted this research and it seeks to ascertain how the Seventh-Day Adventist Church is contributing to the successful integration of PWDs into the religio-social life of the Pioneer Ghana Conference.

1.2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In line with the propagation of the advent message based on the Three Angels' Message (3AM) in Rev 14:6-12, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had attracted few PWDs. Notwithstanding, the few PWDs identified in the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana conference seemed underutilized as far as involvement in pastoral ministry, local church and district leaderships, church programmes and activities were concerned. These prompted a problem of involvement and integration of PWDs in the church's religio-social life, hence this study.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research is guided by two (2) main questions.

1. What are the challenges of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana?
Conference?
2. What pragmatic steps has the Pioneer Ghana Conference instituted to ensure the integration of PWDs into their religio-social space?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objectives to this research are formulated in two (2) folds;

1. To investigate the challenges of PWDs into the Seventh-day Adventist system at Pioneer Ghana Conference.
2. To analyze the pragmatic steps that the Pioneer Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church has outlined to improve the integration of PWDs into the religio-social space.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study attempts to investigate the pragmatic efforts that the Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has outlined to guide in the creation of an enabling environment for PWDs to be integrated into the religio-social space. The research will therefore cover some selected churches in the Pioneer Ghana Conference, an administrative

segment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with her Headquarters at Agona Swedru. The churches shall include Kasoa Central Church, Swedru Central Church, Winneba Central Church and Bawjiase Central Church. These churches are headquarters of the various districts, hence data collected could explain the challenges of PWDs and the plans outlined for their integration into the church system.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research is knit into the framework of Social Integration. According to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), social integration is simply explained as “a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society.”⁶

Ritzer also indicates that the “perspective of social integration focuses on the life-world and the ways in which the action system is integrated through either normatively guaranteed or communicatively achieved consensus”⁷

Moreover, Peter Blau a major proponent of the concept of social integration uses the analogy below to explain Social integration:

Social integration prevails in a group if bonds of attraction unite its members. Persons interested in becoming integrated members of a group are under pressure to impress the other members that they would make attractive associates, but the resulting competition for popularity gives rise to defensive tactics that block social integration.

⁶ United Nations Research institute for social Development, Social Integration: Approaches and issues. UNRISD

BRIEFING PAPER No. 1, (World summit for Social Development, March 1994) 5

⁷ George Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory, 6th Edition* (Boston: MacGrow- Hill Education, 2000), 410 ⁸ Peter Blau, “*The Theory of social Integration*”, in American journal of sociology vol. LXV, MAY 1960, NUMBER 6, 545.

A member who can provide valued services to the others forces them to give up their defensive tendencies and manifest their attraction to him; the process in which his services are exchanged for their respect and deference gives rise to social differentiation. Alternatively, one who demonstrates his approachability obviates the need for the defensiveness of others and thus frees them to express their feelings of attraction to him; the process in which his disclaimer of superordinate status is exchanged for their acceptance gives rise to social integration.⁸

In similar assertion, Durkheim identified social integration as “the degree to which people are tied to their social group as a key social factor...⁸ Social integration is therefore seen as a concept that attempts to bridge social difference and to promote healthy social relationship. Social integration encompasses the enabling social structure that gives rise to smooth interpersonal acceptance for unrestricted interactions. It drives on the immersion of individuals into a social space without boundaries as may pertain in hostile environment.

This concept was adopted for this study in that, the study pays a particular attention to a minority group that is to be integrated into a larger communal life. By inference, the concept of social integration attempts to define, prescribe or describe patterns, key pragmatic steps and communication models that may significantly influence social bonds and to encourage integration. PWDs form part of the vulnerable minority in societies and there are challenges with the society coping with them. Among other concepts, social integration could best support this discourse. Therefore, the researcher finds this concept appropriate so that, it may support in arriving at findings and interpretation which would enhance the effectiveness in this work. The concept may have limitations however, since the study deals with the incorporation of a marginalized minority group into a larger social structure, the concept of social integration may

⁸ James M. Henslin, *Sociology: Down-to-Earth Approach ,Ninth edition* (Boston, Pearson A&B, 2008), 12

be considered useful in this study and could drive the research to help develop systematic procedures to help unearth the effective analysis.

1.6 METHODOLOGY AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

1.6.1 Primary Sources and Sampling Size

Phenomenological approach was used in this study. According to Smith, Flower, et al phenomenology “denotes the study of individuals’ perceptions, feelings, and lived experience. It shares a particular interest in thinking about the experience of being human is like, in all of its various aspects, but especially in terms of the things that matter to us and which constitute our lived world”⁹

Due to the broad nature of phenomenological study, the work was restricted to Phenomenology of Religion. According to Cox, Phenomenology of Religion is “a method adapting the procedures of epochè and eidetic intuition to the varied symbolic expressions of that which people appropriately respond to as being of unrestricted value for them.”¹⁰ In this study, the researcher attempted to conduct the study in a manner that restricted the research to be devoid of all personal biases. This further suggests that the researcher allowed the respondents to reveal their personal sentiments devoid of the researcher’s parochial interest or influence. According to the researcher, this approach was needful since it afforded the researcher to gather quality data which emanate from the experience of the respondents.

⁹ Smith, Flower and Larkin, “Collecting Qualitative Data: A manual for applied Research”, ed. Greg Guest, Emily E.

Namey and Marilyl L. Mitchel (California: SAGE Publication Inc, 2013) ,10

¹⁰ James L. Cox, Expressing the Sacred: an introduction to the phenomenology of Religion(University of Zimbabwe Publication, 1992), 26

The study employed three (3) major tools: interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Below suggest how these methods were applied:

Interviews were conducted in three phases. The first phase included one-on-one interviews with four (4) PWDs. This was to help unearth the plights of the PWDs in the SDA Church. PWDs' shared experiences supported in finding out their perception about how the SDA Church coordinated the involvement of PWDs in the affairs of the church.

The second phase interviews involved three (3) leaders in authority at Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Out of the three (3), two were senior clergy and one laity. The purpose for which these leaders in authority were engaged was to examine their thoughts and interest in relation to matters of PWDs in the SDA Church and the pragmatic steps the Church at Pioneer Ghana conference have adopt to fully integrate PWDs into the SDA Church system.

The third phase interviews were conducted to solicit views from four (4) selected church members within Pioneer Ghana Conference.

Furthermore, focus groups targeted church members within the ages of 18yrs and 65yrs. These members were engaged in discussions to ascertain the relationship between the Seventh-day Adventist church members, church structures and PWDs at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

Again, the researcher used observations to ascertain other physical structures available to support the integration of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The research was a qualitative study. Denzin & Lincoln defined qualitative research as a research module that study "things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them."¹¹

¹¹ Denzin & Lincoln, "Collecting Qualitative Data: A manual for applied Research" ed. Greg Guest, Emily E.

1.6.2 Secondary Sources

Due to the sensitivity of the area of the research, the researcher shall depend on varied available secondary sources to complement the primary sources of data. These include books, theses, journal, biographies, brochures, church documents that give highlights or in-depth contribution towards the concept of disability and integration.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The research hinges on two important key words and these are; Disability and Integration.

1.7.1 Disability

In many societies of the world, disability is considered deviation from the normal physical appearance of individuals. In the US, studies in disability reveal that:

people with disability constitute a significant portion of the population...Although so many people are affected, until fairly recently, most of the literature on this population viewed disability as a form of deviance from ability and appearance norms of Western society.¹²

Impairment is identified as a malfunctioning of any part of the human body and that, any individual who lacks functioning ability of any body part is considered disabled. Disability may cover defects in the eye, ear, speech and other parts of the body that are either conspicuous or inconspicuous.

Namey and Marilyl L. Mitchell (California: SAGE Publication Inc, 2013), 3

¹² Rosalyn Benjamin Darling, *Disability and Identity, Negotiating Self in a Changing Society* (Boston: lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013) 1

The International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health defines disability as “an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions”¹³ Deviation from normal human stature has been the source of stigma and marginalization for decades. The society hinges on certain ideals and any deviation from such ideals encourages exclusion. Goffman states that, “A stigma is an attribute that makes a person different from others in a social category, and it reduces a person to a tainted or discounted status”¹⁴ In his attempt to distinguish between deviance and stigma, Goffman suggests stigma “as attribute that is deeply discrediting ‘and that reduces the person from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one’”¹⁵ In another literature, Goffman explains stigma as referring “to a special kind of discrepancy between actual and virtual social identity and may take the form of slights, snubs, tackles remarks.”¹⁶ Undoubtedly, these remarks facilitate the coiling of PWDs inciting them to not wanting to avail themselves for social discourses and interaction.

There are various expressive forms of stigma in social interactions especially when one is categorized among certain class of people who are seen to odd in the society. The social environment hardly accepts the deviants and most often treats them with contempt in the social order. David and Sharon argue that “...every culture views disability as a problem in need of a solution and this belief establishes one of the major modes of historical address directed toward people with disability”¹⁷ In African societies, disability is abomination. Devlieger expresses that

¹³ Michel Pascal Tchiakpe et al, *The Disability Act of Ghana: Building Accessibility of Visually Impaired Persons in two Districts in the Ashanti Region of Ghana*. 1

¹⁴ Erving Goffman, “Disability; Stigma and Identity,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed Lennard J. Davis (New

York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 134

¹⁵ William Kornblum, *Sociology in Changing World* (Australia: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 87.

¹⁶ Rosalyn Benjamin Darling, *Disability and Identity, Negotiating Self in a Changing Society* (Boston: lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 16

¹⁷ David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, “**Narrative Prosthesis**,” in *Disability studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 206

“Among the Songye of Zaire, a deformed child may be thrown into a river or buried in an anthill”¹⁸

The ill treatment of PWDs has generated the need for social interventions that would embrace the needs of PWDs and to situate them appropriately into the social life. Mitchell and Snyder conclude that “perception of ‘crisis’ or a ‘special situation’ has made disabled people the subject of not only governmental policies and social programs but also a primary object of literary representation.”¹⁹ This suggests that there is the need for closer collaboration between governments, private institutions, religious institutions, groups of persons and individuals to be engaged in researching into the disability problems and to aid in structured solutions to facilitate the incorporation of PWDs into the religio-social space. Dredger in Tom Shakespeare highlighted that in “... many countries of the world, disabled people and their allies have organised over the last three decades to challenge the historical oppressions and exclusion of disabled people.”²⁰ However social segregation and marginalization of PWDs still exist. In some social thoughts, disability is considered a divine punishment. It basically suggests that any form of disability is a punishment meted out for wrong doing. Until the emergence of enlightenment, disability has been concluded to have resulted probably from generational curses also. In the Mesopotamia records, the gods are believed to have power to command a disability as punitive action on a person. Walls posits, “Ancient Mesopotamian curses certainly seem to equate the loss of vision with a devastating disability, and certain criminals and prisoners of war were punished

¹⁸ Rosalyn Benjamin Darling, *Disability and Identity, Negotiating Self in a Changing Society*, 13

¹⁹ David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 206

²⁰ Tom Shakespeare, “The Social model of Disability” in *Disability studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 195

with blindness and put to hard labor.”²¹ These simply describe the perception of disability in many social and cultural jurisdictions including the African setting as not an ordinary challenge. Hence, there has existed the perception that if one person is found either visually or hearing impaired, it has resulted from punishment from the gods. This is common in most belief systems. These notwithstanding, there have been series of policies to guide disability by states and agencies. In the Americans’ jurisdiction,

Americans with Disability Act (ADA) of 1990 prohibits employers (in government and private sectors) from discriminating against a qualified individual with disability who can perform the essential functions (i.e. the fundamental of critical duties) of the job with or without reasonable accommodation...The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodation if requested by employees with disabilities as long as they do not impose an undue hardship on the viability of the business²²

These standards on disability inclusion have been carried extensively into other socio-cultural and religious jurisdictions. In Ghana, the Disability Act was passed in 2006 to open the societal doors for PWDs to be accommodated and incorporated in the religio-social life of society. Alberta confirms that “The Persons with Disability Act, 2006, makes provision for inclusive participation for PWDs in Ghana’s political governance. Nonetheless, political participation of PWDs in Ghana is generally low.”²³ Her assessment suggests a limited participation of PWDs in Political activities in Ghana. It must be noted that the limited participation of PWDs in Ghana extends beyond political front to other social dimensions including the religious environments.

²¹ Neal H. Walls, “The Origin of Disabled Body: Disability in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Rethinking Disability in Biblical Studies*, Ed. Hector Avalos (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 27

²² Virginia C. Stoffel and Deborah B. Pitt, Work As Occupation, in *Occupational Therapy*, 699

²³ Alberta Enyaawah Arthur, “Political Participation of Persons with Disability (PWDs) in Ghana” (Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2017) iii

To assess the social justification of denying PWDs opportunities to participate in all social activities, it is important to penetrate into the social concept of who is worth classifying as human. Susan and Karen relate to three (3) aspects as composition of human person.

From their point of view,

The person is viewed as an integrated whole who incorporates spirituality, social and cultural experiences and observable occupational performances. The performance components refer to what the person feels (affecting), think (cognitive), and doing (physical) which contribute to the successful engagement in occupation... and provide a source for self-determination and personal control.²⁴

I may reframe their submission in these three items below:

- a. The one who can think
- b. Express feelings
- c. One who could undertake physical activities.

These keys from the perspective of Susan and Keren would adequately answer the quest to consider PWDs as qualified to be counted among human person. However, the soundness and logical expression of oneself would better establish the difference. This is because PWDs are able to carry out all these activities to their own limits. Nonetheless, the correctness of their express may better form the basis for differentiation.

Tobin's differential argument may better suit the course of this research. Tobin establishes that the:

ideology of ability is at its simplest the preference for ablebodiedness. At its most radical, it defines the baseline by which humanness is determined, setting the measure of body and mind that gives or denies human person status or individual person...Disability defines the invisible center around which our contradictory ideology about human ability revolves. For

²⁴ Susan Strong and Rebeiro Gruhl, "Person-Environment-Occupation Model," in *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health: Vision for Participation*, ed. Catana Brown (Philadelphia, F.A. Davis Company, 2011) ,33

the ideology of ability makes us fear disability, requiring that we imagine our bodies are same time that we might perfect them²⁵

Tobin focuses on fifteen point notes that differentiate ability from disability and for the purpose of this study, five (5) of them shall be selected for consideration. In other words, they are suggested differences between able bodies and disable bodies. They may contribute to social differentiations that may heighten the denial of PWDs from social activity participations:

- The ideology of ability simultaneously banishes disability and turns it into a principle of exclusion.
- Ability is the supreme indicator of value when judging human actions, condition, thought, goals, intentions, and desires
- The able body has a great capacity for self -transformation. It can be trained to do almost anything; it adjusts to new situations. The disabled body is limited in what it can do and what it can be trained to do. It experiences new situations as obstacles
- It is better to be dead than disabled.
- The value for human life arises as a question only when a person is disabled.²⁶

These comparisons seem to have intentions of creating discrepancies that are geared towards maligning PWDs.

In similar consideration, Safilio-Rothschild argues that some other social justifications for the exclusion and marginalization of PWDs. He enumerates:

- (i) They are relegated to separate place in society (encourage to interact with their ‘own kind’)
- (ii) They are considered by the majority to be inferior.

²⁵ Tobin Sieber, “Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment,” in *Disability studies Reader*, ed, Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017) , 314,315

²⁶ Tobin Sieber, “Disability and the Theory of Complex Embodiment,” 315

- (iii) Their segregation is rationalized as being better for them.
- (iv) They are evaluated on the basis of their categorical membership rather than their individual characteristics²⁷

1.7.2 Integration

There have been series of explanations that have been proposed to expound the term 'Integration' in the field of the social sciences. Integration "is the process by which individuals and groups come to interact freely and equally in society without regards to distinction of skin color."²⁸ The above explanation suggests three (3) key areas that are worth engaging for deeper comprehension; (a) interact freely, (b) interact equally, and (c) interact without distinction. It may be prudent to attempt to relate with these key areas to facilitate the understanding of the concept of 'integration' as used in the above explanation and in the context of this study:

- (a) "Interact freely" is to relate without restrictions. Hence, integration in the above explanation focuses on restriction- free environment where individuals can relate and communicate with each person or group of individuals without social boundaries. Here, each person in the social space could have access to each other devoid of intimidation. In such circumstance, there is high level of social interaction which does not attract hostile barriers that limit social communication or interdependence. The self is totally immersed into social life. Elkin and Handel (1989) agree that

²⁷ Rosalyn Benjamin Darling, "Disability and Identity, Negotiating Self in a Changing Society," 16

²⁸ *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Science*, ed. William A. Darity Jnr (Detroit: Gale CENGAGE LEARNING, 2008), 56

“The self is the outcome of socialization; it may be defined as ‘the capacity to represent oneself what one wishes to communicate to others’²⁹

(b) Interact equally: In the sense as the word is used above, the relationship that is built between persons in the social space must not place the social class of persons at the centre. Each person is recognized with high sense of equity and respect. Opportunities are made available to all thereby making each person a beneficiary of all social assets and liabilities. Balance is created in extending respect and there is the avoidance of reduction of persons or group of persons into a lower class category which may necessitate the notion of social differences or segregation. (c) Interact without distinction- In this sense of usage, emphasis is placed on the erasure of social classification, a person or persons are related to one another with no background idea of considering the socio- cultural status, complexion, health status and religious affiliation. One is not addressed, or either treated with humility or disrespect based of his or her social stature, position, colour or ethnic orientation.

In relation to the explanation above, integration is the incorporation of all persons in a social space whereby individuals have chances to express themselves freely without intimidation or stigma. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on equal rights of person in the social structure where limitation is not ascribed to a person or group of persons who may be disadvantaged in the religio-social environments. In addition, social classification for social attention does not matter in terms of integration since all persons are well absorbed into the social structure fully.

Understanding ‘integration’ in the context above helps to drive the study by narrowing it to PWDs.

²⁹ Elkin & Handel in William Kornblum, *Sociology in Changing World sixth Edition* (Australia: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 123

Margeret Rouse explains integration as “the act of bringing together smaller components into a single system that functions as one”³⁰ Her focus is directed to the idea of attraction of units of separate systemic functional bodies into a single unit. This is to facilitate swift functional system with the idea of interdependence. Here, there seem to be the connection that is created between single units, that is, single individuals into a body or group that may cooperate for a common reason or purpose. In simple terms, Rouse imagines integration in the context of polling together single pieces of items into a complex whole to function together as one whole.

It is important to note that individuals in every society need others to depend on for smooth social adjustment and coordination. William Kornblum asserts that:

through out life, individuals maintain relationships in an enormous range of social structures, of which families are just one [and that] People may be members of relatively small groups like friendship or peer group and the work. They may also be members of larger structures like churches, business organizations, or public agencies.³¹

In all these associations, proper integration facilitates easy social interrelationships. There are occasions where in the social structure, minority groups suffer rejection and they are dissociated from social discourses. Typically, they are said to have been disintegrated from the social structure and that may be the reason for marginalization and stigma.

In the church, integration plays a significant role by acting as the force of attraction. Individuals may be plagued with varied physical challenges yet when such persons are well received and fully recognized in the church they are motivated to contribute to the wellbeing of their social group of affiliation. They immerse themselves into the social networks. William undoubtedly

³⁰ <https://searchcustomerexperience.techtargget.com/definition/integration>

³¹ William Kornblum, *Sociology in Changing World*, 87.

supports this position by emphasizing that "... these social structures (as the church) are composed of groups with degrees of complexity and quite different patterns of interactions"³²

It is therefore inadequate to unearth a person's potentials when there have not been social bonds.

Social bonds are also heightened through thoughtful social integration.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The work seeks to direct the attention of churches and other religious organizations to recognize their religious roles to PWDs. As a matter of urgency, governmental and non-governmental agencies are initiating policies that would address the needs of PWDs in societies. As such, the role of Christian institutions cannot be ignored since their participation in finding solution to the integration and involvement challenges of PWDs in the religio-social settings must be considered a priority.

Secondly, the work attempts to bring out the challenges of PWD and the strategies that could be adopted to reduce the level of stigma that PWDs face in the church settings. Sincerely, stringent effort is needed to overcome the challenges of PWDs in these religio-social settings and thus, this work seeks to elucidate the appropriate mechanism which would guide in addressing the plights of PWDs in their attempts to adapt into the religio-social life of their communities. Furthermore, this research seeks bring out the dignity that is needed to be accorded PWDs in all facets of social engagements including Pastoring and other religious leaderships.

Finally, the research seeks to add to existing academic knowledge available on disability and social inclusion.

³² William Kornblum, *Sociology in Changing World*, 87

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The research was categorized into five (5) chapters. Chapter one (1) covered the general introduction to the study. It elucidated the background of the study, statement of problem, the research question, the research objectives, scope of the study, conceptual framework, methodology and methods of data collection, significance of the study, organization of chapters and definition of terms.

Chapter two (2) discussed the biblical perspectives and African socio-cultural perceptions on disabilities and social inclusion. Chapter three (3) focused on The Seventh-day Adventist Church and disability support initiatives in Ghana.

Chapter four (4) looked at an analysis and discussion of findings on the integration of PWDs into the Seventh-day Adventist Church system at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

The study closed in chapter five (5) with summary, major finding, conclusions, and recommendation.

1.10 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.10.1 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

These are persons who may be suffering from any physical or psychological health challenges. They are usually seen as a deviation from what constitute personhood. They include persons with visual and hearing impairments, paralytics, the leprous, and the deaf.

1.10.2 Pioneer Ghana Conference (PGC)

This is an administrative section of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church with the headquarters at Agona Swedru in the central region of Ghana. It is composed of twenty- five Districts with twenty eight (28) Pastoral staff.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES AND AFRICAN SOCIO-CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS ON DISABILITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

2.0 THE NATURE OF MAN IN THE PRE-SIN ERA

The introduction of medical advancement has encouraged the diversification of investigations, assessments, confirmations and conclusions on causes of disabilities in our present world. Physiological damages, injuries, accidents or critical medical conditions may be listed in the domain of medical causes of disabilities.

Nevertheless, there are other dimensions to the causes of disabilities that are rooted in the traditional worldviews. In Ghana for instance, disabilities are not considered ordinary. According to Ahoritor the, “second cause of disabilities rooted in the traditional worldview of the North Tongu people... attributed some causes of disabilities to spiritual forces especially those powers inimical to the wellbeing of human beings.”³³. Interestingly, it was discovered in one of the interviews with PWDs that evil forces have the tendencies to cause disabilities in persons. PWD 2 confirmed that after some years of suffering from lameness, the mother narrated to him that his disability was a collaborated spiritual attack orchestrated by two women who were already married to his father. According to PWD 2, the mother asserted that due to her submissiveness to the husband, she was cherished and loved by the man. However, out of jealousy the women bewitched her first child who happened to be the interviewee and caused

³³ Godson Ahoritor, “The traditional Beliefs and Attitudes towards Disability Among the People of North Tongu,” (Mphil Thesis, Universirt of Ghana, 2000), 52-53.

that form of disability he suffered. No matter the causal justification by cultural or medical settings, disability is seen as a deviation from the normal bodily composition.

Biblical discourses confirm that the original creatures of God were devoid of imperfection, suffering and woes. Moreover, God does not give out defected things to mankind. This is perfected by the Biblical injunction that lay claims that “God saw everything that he had made, (including man), and, behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Again, there may be respite in the records of James that state that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Therefore, disabilities (which are considered deviation from the original form of man) could not be accounted for in the original nature of man in the pre-sin era. The Pre-sin Era refers to the period before humanity disobedience to God’s commandment that restrained him from touching and eating of the forbidden fruit placed in the Garden of Eden. Man would face the consequences of death and hardship should he contradicts God’s commandment, yet he could not help but to risk his entire future. Witnessing suffering and pain on earth from the biblical point of view stresses on the disobedience of man, hence deterioration in the creative art of God.

The Bible presents a throwback of the artistic work of God claiming that, “...God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31 KJV). It included man created in the “image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26). Leland Ryken et al proved that:

Adam is first and foremost related to God. In the spare and schematized language of Gen 1, Adam is the fleshly distillation of the creative and divine work, stamped with the divine image...Adam stands in unique relationship with God. The divine image in man and woman (Gen 1:27) ... No stone or wood chiseled into godling’s image, ‘the Adam’ in two-male and female is animated, walking, talking and relating

mediation of the essence, will and work of the Sovereign
Creator God³⁴

The above observation emphasizes on two important aspect of the Divine Being reflected in man. This is referred to as the ‘dual make-up of human persons.’ They are ‘image and likeness.’ These two symbolic representations may be suggested as connoting architectural and behavioral disposition of man that mirrors God. Man is thought about as emitting the Divine fragrance and has a composition of a thoughtful design that symbolizes uniqueness. The uniqueness of man reflects his completeness and thus, debunks original disability. We can consider the unique man ‘*walking, talking and relating mediation of essence*’. Man’s completeness reflects the able God who does not represent devilish oppressions instigating deficiencies on man’s livelihood.

Human composition and his surrounding could be viewed in amazement and thus, baffled minds. It is therefore not disturbing to follow the debates which have been generated between creationists and evolutionists. Whereas the Creationist believes that man was a planned art work of God that followed thoughtful creative skills, the Evolutionist primarily believes that there is no intelligent designer behind the creative art work of man and his environment. Thus, man has existed through a metamorphosis of other beings which necessarily did not originate from a thoughtful designer. In Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*, he argues that the human race derived from “a hairy quadrumanous animal belonging to the great anthropoid group, and related to the progenitors of the orangutan, chimpanzee, and gorilla.”³⁵ No matter the intensity of the debate surrounding the existence of man, there is a value about life that is constantly appreciated. Diel affirms that:

Human life has meaning and value insofar as it is anchored in
mystery, insofar as emotion in the presence of the mystery of

³⁴ , *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Ed. Leland Ryken et al (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 9

³⁵ Colin Mitchell, *The case for Creationism* (Grantham: Autumn House Limited,1995),38

life and death calms metaphysical anxiety instead of exalting it by speculation, insofar as man loves life in spite of death (and this is the only love that is not sentimental), knowing that mystery is everywhere around him and in him as well.³⁶

In as much as the Christian views mystery as something incomprehensible and limited to be explained by human minds, disabilities are often associated with the influence of sin. Biblical estimations and pictorial communications provide that, anything which has not originated from God has satanic influence since God had no disability intentions for man.

However, Adam who is considered the handiwork of the Divine Creator, who is linked to God in reference to ‘image and likeness’, has no description that suggests any bodily deviation. Hence, he was seen as a perfect being that originated from a perfect God. For Gibson, “Study of the creation has revealed much evidence for the idea that a divine Creator stands behind the scene. Scientists have wonderful opportunities to see the evidence of God’s creativity and to ponder His greatness.”³⁷

There was no mark of imperfection labeled on Adam since he reflected the creative excellence of the Divine. Adam appreciated the physical beauty of his help mate and found the Divine image that communicated perfection in Eve. The pair was perfectly good. According to Benner,

The application of the term ‘good’ to everything God had made, and the repetition of the word with emphasis ‘very’ at the close of creation with man as its crown and glory, indicate that nothing imperfect had come forth from God’s hand³⁸

³⁶ Paul Diel, *Symbolism in the Bible* (San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 6

³⁷ James L. Gibson, *Affirmation of Creation* (Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist), accessed 19-02-2020 at 145pm.
<https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Affirmation%20of%20Creation.pdf>

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 217- 218

The Hebrew Text and Lexicon of Genesis indicate “likeness” as a copy of resemblance. The quality or state of being like... someone else”³⁸ By inference, it seeks to suggest that man has the resemblance of God in the quality of mind and was adorned with quality physical stature devoid of any bodily malfunction, diseases or disability. Adutwum supports that “... human beings are by nature closer to God than any other object of creation...This means that mankind has a special, speech-involving relationship with the creator”³⁹

In other words, man as an “image of God” transposes him to be a “reproduction or imitation of the form...or a shadow of the original.”⁴⁰ The ‘original’ in the context of this study refers to God the Creator. Therefore, humanity has from the beginnings of creation reflected the nobility of God. It is upon this background that Wright acknowledges that man must be in constant appreciation to God based on these three (3) important observations below:

Firstly, humans alone of all creatures have been made by God in his own image. Secondly, all other creatures have been put ‘under his feet’ as the creature just a little lower than the angels (or God) and crowned with glory and honour. (Ps 8:5-6). And thirdly, God declares human life to have a particular sanctity-within the general principles that all life matters to God⁴¹

In these regards, the pre-sin era seems to have out-dooed human persons who exhibited unique physical, mental and relational beauty that encapsulate God’s love for human life among other creatures. Davis leaves a mark of justification when he appends to the uniqueness of man by asserting that:

³⁸ Jeff A. Benner, *Hebrew Text and Lexicon* (College Station:Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc, 2007),187

³⁹ Ofosu Adutwum, “Discipline in the Old Testament:The Perspective of the Primeval History, Genesis1-11” in *Ghana bulletin of Theology* Vol 2,ed. Cephas Omenyo et al (Legon: Department for the Study of Religions, 2007) ,80

⁴⁰ Jeff A. Benner, *Hebrew Text and Lexicon*, 190

⁴¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 127128

...the notion of fingerprinting pushes forward the idea that the human body is standardized and contains a serial number, as it were, embedded in its corporeality. Thus, the body has an identity that coincides with its essence and cannot be altered by moral, artistic, or human will. This indelibility of corporeal identity only furthers the mark placed on the body by other physical qualities-intelligence, height, reaction time.⁴²

The idea of intelligent design behind the creation of Man generates a conscious familiarity with the creationist assertions on the beginnings of human life and communal living. There were no physical and mentally ill conditions that were disadvantageous to the healthy social and communal relationship between Adam and Eve. They were fond of each other with no social barrier resulting from disabilities.

Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance ...As man came forth from the hand of his creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with light of life and joy.⁴³

Undoubtedly, one can agree with Adutwum that "the creation of humanity is presented as an inexplicable, indescribable and wonderful process"⁴⁴ hence, human perfection was certified before sin.

2.0.1 THE NOTION OF SIN AND DISABILITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In John 9:1-3, there is a record of an encounter between Jesus and His disciples on one hand and a man born blind on the other hand. The discussion that ensued between Jesus and His disciple has an important impact on human conception of the effects of sin. Therefore, the discussion

⁴² Lennard J. Davis, "Disability, Normality, and Power," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4

⁴³ Ellen G. White, *Messenger of Hope, Connecting With Jesus* (Seoul: Everlasting Gospel Publishing Association, n.a), 20

⁴⁴ Adutwum, "Discipline in the Old Testament: The Perspective of the Primeval History," 81.

shall be situated in the context of the text to unearth a fundamental acknowledgement that would influence positively the stigma on PWDs. Furthermore, the narrative shall be used in the perspective of PWDs to review the Christian thought on the application of the notion of sin and disabilities.

It is an undeniable fact that Biblical records have presented on countless occasions the disciples of Jesus witnessing His ministry of healing. According to the gospel of Mark, Jesus healed a man who was deaf and at the same time hearing impaired: Mark states “And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.” (Mark 7:31, 32).

Again, Luke presents another woman with withered hand for eighteen (18) years who benefitted from Jesus’ healing mercies:

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up [herself]. And when Jesus saw her, he called [her to him], and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid [his] hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (Luke 13:10-13)

These texts provide New Testament evidences of how PWDs were treated in the time of Jesus, the foundation of Christianity.

Furthermore, John 9:1-3 is adopted due to its uniqueness and its direct application to this study on one hand and the generation of a controversial argument that needs strict clarification. Its uniqueness is embedded in the question that the disciples asked Jesus which brings to attention the justification of disability on the basis of committed sin.

The narrative begins with Jesus and His disciples' encounter with a man born blind and exposing his frailty and disability. "The Saviour knew the character of men who He had chosen; all their weaknesses and errors were open before Him; ...They were almost constantly with Him, witnessing His miracles, and hearing His words."⁴⁵ The sympathy of the Disciples may have informed the question to the Master. They asked, "...who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" Interestingly, the question seems fundamental to Christian theologies and further underscores the essence of sin-free living. There are Biblical references that transport the notion of sin to all sufferings and ill-life situations. Paul laments, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Most Christian literatures relate suffering: disease and hardship to sin. "For the people of the Bible the prevailing understanding was that diseases were the consequences of sin...When the righteous suffered, they were being harassed by Satan or his angels."⁴⁶ Genesis 3:17-19 is a direct augmentation of the "Sin-Suffering" conception. God declared to Adam:

... Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return. (Gen 3:17-19).

Sin undeniably is a mystery. However, the Christian minds seem to have been absorbed in a thought that every misfortune results from sin. This study shall not underestimate the deadly

⁴⁵ White, *Connecting With Jesus*, 600.

⁴⁶ *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 203.

effect of sin because “The Bible says that the world was created carefully and created ‘very good.’ How God felt about His creation is evident in the accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2. This is the context in which we should read the story of the fall in Genesis and the heartbrokenness of God as He confronts the people He has made.”⁴⁷ To add, the Expositor’s Bible Commentary presents the original intent of God as contrasted by the choices that Adam made. It asserts, “Before the fall man was taken from the ground and given the ‘breath of life’ (Gen 2:7). As a result of the fall however, man must return to the ground and the dust from which he was taken.”⁴⁸ Death unequivocally has become the ultimate goal to life, but prior to death are many human sufferings which include disabilities. Macquarrie profoundly remarks, “Man in Sartre’s famous phrase is ‘useless passion,’ for his existence is such as to make nonsense of his aspirations and potentialities.”⁴⁹ *The Seventh-day Adventists’ Belief* supports that “Some may feel that the sentence of death was too severe a penalty for eating the forbidden fruit. But we can only gauge the seriousness of the transgression in the light of the effect of Adam’s sin on the human race”⁵¹

Jesus’ answer in the narrative directed the minds of the disciples whose limited physical minds needed to be penetrated by the master for redirection. Jesus remarked, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:3). Essentially, the disciples needed other options to satisfy their curiosity and Jesus perfectly brought afore other possibilities of disabilities.

⁴⁷ “The Least of These, Ministering to those in need,” ed. Clifford. R. Goldstein (Accra: Advent Press, 2019), 2

⁴⁸ Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol. 2* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1990) ,57

⁴⁹ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology :second Edition* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1977),64 ⁵¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe, A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine*(Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association,2005),103

Words cannot be minced in emphasizing the commonalities in thoughts and opinions formed around PWDs as were the disciples. In Christian societies where the notion of sin is easily applied to any life full of sorrows, one would almost always condemn any person plaque with any disease as sinful and hence reaping the fruits of his sins. The disciple must not be criticized for quizzing Jesus on the fact of ‘Sin-Disability’ mentality in reference to the quote in John 9:1 as above.

It is important to assert that humans must not overlook the tenet of their relationship with God in this sin- stricken world. The Psalmist educates that “He (God) has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10 NAV).

The discussion concludes with the *Documents of the Christian Church* edited by Henry Betterson & Chris Maunder, Pelagius letter to Demetrias that addresses a fundamental issue that compliments the need to exercise restraint in any attempt to attribute every sickness to sin especially disabilities. He laments:

...We are only human, and hindered by weakness of flesh.’ Blind folly and presumptuous blasphemy! We ascribe to God of knowledge the guilt of two-fold ignorance, ignorance of his own creation and of his command. As if, forgetting the weakness of men, his own creation, he had laid upon men commands which they were unable to bear. And at the same time (God forgive us!) we ascribe to the Just One unrighteousness and cruelty to the Holy One; the first by complaining that he has commanded the impossible, the second, by imagining that a man will be condemn by him for what he could not help; so that (the blasphemy of it!) God is thought of as seeking our punishment rather than salvation...No one knows the extent of our strength better than he who gave us that strength...He has not willed to command anything impossible, for he is righteous; and he will not condemn a man of what he could not help, for he is holy.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Henry Betterson & Chris Maunder, *Documents of The Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59 ⁵³ John Macquarrie, *principles of Christian Theology* (second Edition),65

2.1 BIBLICAL REVIEWS ON SETTINGS, SOCIAL RESPONSES AND THE EXPERIENCES OF IDENTIFIED PWDs IN THE BIBLE

The challenges associated with disabilities cannot be overemphasized. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that disability is considered deviation from the original personhood. Though Macquarrie would say “Every existence is unique; it is someone’s own, unrepeatable and irreplaceable.”⁵³ It is worth emphasizing that disability seems to give negative impressions about victims since human beings are often judged by their physical appearance. The physical impression expressed about persons could be aligned to the personal views associated with what constitute personhood. This could simply be linked with what may be termed body image. Slades in Teleporos and McCabe defines body image “as loose mental representation of body shape, size and form which is influenced by variety of historical, cultural, social, individual and biological factors which operate over varying time spans...”⁵¹

These notwithstanding, the introductory discussions which focused on the nature of man in the pre-sin era painted a clear picture juxtaposing the conditions of man before and after the emergence of sin. Undoubtedly, Sin is believed to have influenced man’s physical stature negatively and most religious and cultural communities find it challenging to dissociate most health conditions from sin. The introductory verses of John 9 bring to light the affiliation of disabilities to sin.

And as [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man which was blind from [his] birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. (John 9:1-3)

⁵¹ George Taleporos and Marita P. McCabe, “Body Image and Physical Disability: Personal Perspective,” in *Disability and Society*, ed. Renu Addlakha (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan Private Ltd, 2009),146-147

There are therefore records of numerous named and unnamed persons who suffered varied disabilities. The gospel of Mark presents a record of an encounter between Jesus and a PWD named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus. In the traditional sense of the Jew, a father's name could be prefixed with 'Bar'-meaning 'son' and that could become a name given to the new born child. Interestingly, Bartimaeus (Bar-Timaeus) simply refers to the son of Timaeus.

The setting for Mark's record of Blind Bartimaeus was the then modern day Jericho which Bible historians believe:

Herod the Great founded, which is today represented by ruins called Tulul Abu el-'Alayiq. Jericho served as the winter capital, and its balmy winter climate was in striking contrast to the bone-chilling dump winter of Jerusalem. The city was located on the W edge of the Jordan plain where the Wadi Qelt opens out onto the plains.⁵²

Jericho was a metropolitan city that accommodated people from all walks of life. "Beggars were also found in these rich cities, for almsgiving was highly meritorious."⁵³ There could be other classes of people who might have been captured in the city of Jericho but for the purpose of this study, the focus would be on Bartimaeus, a PWD.

It is clear in the study that the historical event of the Bible captures most PWDs along roadsides begging for alms. Could it possibly be the case that they were rejected by their families, or it was part of the societal norms to keep PWDs by the roadside for the society to honour them with a token of livelihood support and for such donors to receive blessings?

This work intends to shift attention to the reaction of the masses that followed Jesus and heard Blind Bartimaeus, a PWD screaming for assistance from Jesus. "When he heard that it was Jesus

⁵² George and McCabe, "Body Image and Physical Disability: Personal Perspective," 838.

⁵³ George and McCabe, "Body Image and Physical Disability: Personal Perspective," 839.

of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David have mercy on me!” (Mark 10: 47-48 NIV). It is important to analyze critically the action of Bartimaeus and the reaction of the people. Firstly, it has been established from the historical records that the society considered it a meritorious responsibility to attend to the needs of PWDs by the roadside. Therefore, “The blind, the lame and others who could not engage in the traditional occupations of the day could support themselves only by begging, normally on a busy roadside. Judaism considered it righteous to help them.”⁵⁴ Therefore, most of PWDs were kept there and alms were distributed to them. Secondly, PWDs were considered as social beings hence they had space in the social structure and they were cared for by the Jewish communities. Otherwise, they could have been cast out of their roadsides possibly to the outskirts or secluded areas.

Furthermore, the Gospel of Mark records another PWD who was largely declared ‘Paralytic’ at Capernaum. Little is read about his family life. Nevertheless, the study benefits from the narrative regarding the communal support that PWDs commonly receive from others for the purpose of integration into social life.

And again he entered into Capernaum after [some] days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive [them], no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken [it] up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. (Mark 2:1-3)

It is not emphatic what they had brought him to Jesus for. However, healing could be a primary reason. Unfortunately, the room was full which made it difficult for them to access Jesus. The

⁵⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Commentary*, 164

narrative presents two (2) fundamental question in relation to the PWD in Mark 2: 2-4 which are worth noting: (a). Could the audience have granted the paralytic (a PWD) a special recognition by offering him a seat in front of Jesus as the friends struggled to integrate him? (b).What could have been the possible reaction of the masses that also yearned to see Jesus amid struggles?

The “four men” in the narrative carrying the paralytic have undisclosed background as whether they were his family relations or friends. However, the focus of this work is to unravel the social support accorded PWDs. “The Four men” in the narrative communicate to the present world how to respond to the needs of PWDs. Due to the social stigma, PWDs are rarely privileged to catch the attention of people for social support. Some of these occurrences could account for the reasons why PWDs have not received the needed attention in the post-modern societies. The foundation of Christianity revolved around compassion that drove the masses to Jesus Christ as He provided the needs of the vulnerable. That became the basis for the development of deep interest to follow Him and the opportunity for Christ to reach them with His message of salvation. The disposition of Jesus’ selfless compassionate support to the outcast revived a new hope in them and affirmed their deep faith in Him. The experiences of the two blind men in the gospel of Matthew exposes further the societal reactions on PWDs. “the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace.” (Matthew 20:31). There is enough evidence in the bible to affirm that stigma and social rejection of PWDs is not a recent phenomenon.

2.2 THE AFRICAN PERCEPTION OF PERSONHOOD AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF PWDs

African Religio-social systems and structure have a pack of in-depth knowledge relevant for contemporary times and even posterity. The African cultural values and belief systems have undoubtedly contributed to the development of Religio-social institutions of the African people

and the world at large. Though there are few isolated differences in cultural views by practice, the ultimate is to inculcate the value of social cohesion. Olupona argues that “African spirituality and cultural traditions, both in their local context on the Continent and in their engagement with the larger global community, contribute significantly to world religious culture.

Africa plays an important role in shaping contemporary discourse.”⁵⁵ That is why the African culture has since centuries stood the test of time in the midst of conscientious external plans to reposition it.

African societies treasure the composition of the human person and thus reserve a greater value for human life. Asare Poku acknowledges that:

The general African belief concerning man is that he is made up of material and immaterial substance, and although there may be variation of this idea from one African society to another, the fundamental assumption among them is the unity of the personality of man. Man is a biological (material) being as well as a spiritual (immaterial) being.⁵⁶

Idowu further projects that “to Africans, the material has meaning and purpose only through the spiritual,…”⁵⁷ The compositions of personhood give a clue of human complex nature and further imply his uniqueness. It is upon this reason that the African believes that, matters relating to human life must not be downplayed. According to Mendonca and Kanungo,

the human being as a whole person functions through the use of the intellect and the will. The intellect uses the external sensory inputs (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell) and internal mental processes (memory and imagination) to penetrate into those deep levels of reality that the physical senses and processes cannot access.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Jacob K. Olupona, “African Humanity Matters: Religious Creativity and Africa’s World Encounters,” in *New Perspectives on African Humanity: Belief, Value & Artistic Expression*, ed. Gordon S. K. Adika, George Ossom-Batsa and Helen Yitah (Accra: Adwinsa Publications (Gh.) Ltd, 2014), 3.

⁵⁶ Kofi Asare Poku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEP International Limited, 1978), 10.

⁵⁷ E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion* (London:SCM Press Ltd, 1973), 143

⁵⁸ Manuel Mendonca and Babindra N. Kanungo, *Ethical Leadership* (New York: Open University Press, 2007), 1

After a deeper reverence to God and the other supernatural beings, human life remains the next socially adored component. Therefore, human welfare and security are priorities. Human being is to be treated with dignity irrespective of social or physical status. Gyekye emphasizes that:

Africans recognize the dignity of the human being and, in consequence, hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare and happiness...Recognition of the value of humanity is intrinsically linked with recognition of the unity of all people, whether or not they are biologically related.⁵⁹

Gyekye's assertion therefore seeks to underpin the clamor for respect for all human life irrespective of one's stature, position or social status. Social recognition elevates human worth and thus, projects healthy human feelings. This signals an integral balance that places all persons under a common pendulum for healthy social and interactive bonds. Gyekye concludes that "The thought, actions, art, and institutions of the African people are replete with expressions of concern for human welfare and the importance of the human being. Furthermore, it remains a popular belief among most African cultures that life belongs to God and as a matter of necessity, must be valued. Tempels asserts that "Life belongs to God. It is He who summons it into being, strengthens and preserves it."⁶⁰ This informs the reasons why any act that inflicts pain or devalue human life and welfare is readily condemned among African people. In addition, Opoku asserts that "West Africans believe that man came into existence because God created him. Man is not the result of some evolutionary process which brought him from a lower form of life to a higher one."⁶¹ This view is primarily linked to the Christian view stamping the Supreme Being

⁵⁹ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An introduction*(Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 2002),23

⁶⁰ Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, 104.

⁶¹ Asare Poku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 92.

as the creator of Man and His creative work is expressed in varied mythical orders in the African conception.

The African heritage continually impacts the life of her members even outside the African soil unless the jurisdiction forcibly regulates the African against his will. Nevertheless, the African merits a solidarity that engulfs him to be distanced from disintegration and isolation. The Negroes of African descent showed in slavery a strong bond of unity and oneness that impressed integration amidst oppression and further projected the value of the African person. Frazier recounts that,

the road by which the Negro, stripped of his cultural heritage, acquire a new personality on American soils. At first his impulses knew no restraint except that imposed by the physical force of those that had enslaved him. But modified and controlled by feelings of tenderness and sympathy toward those who shared his bondage and enabled him to escape from loneliness and isolation.⁶²

Again, family life, which is the building blocks for effective social bondage was also encouraged. Frazier reiterates that "...the bond between the mother and her child continually resisted the disruptive effect of economic interests that were often inimical to family life among the slaves."⁶³ It is of great importance to underscore that the African attempts to bridge social gaps with due cognizance of other economic and social hindrances.

However, there are certain observable cultural practices that seem to undermine the integrity of the human personhood in the African jurisdiction. A perfect example is cited in the belief associated with the birth to twins. There are varied cultural opinions associated with the personhood of twins. In most traditional African societies, twins were considered abominable

⁶² Franklin E. Frazier, *Negro Family in the United State*(Chicago: The University Press, 1966),32

⁶³ Frazier, *Negro Family in the United State*, 32

beings hence were not readily welcomed to integrate with their societies. Nonetheless, in other cultural jurisdiction, they are accepted as beings worthy to be accommodated within the social space. According to Turner, twins "...are symbolically identified with birds, not only on account of the resemblance between 'the multiple hatching of eggs and dual birth of birds' but also because twins, like birds, are classified by the Nuer as 'people of the above' and 'children of God.'"⁶⁴ This on one hand attempts to be aligned with the Christian views on humanity that asserts that man has resemblance of God. The references that place man as a child of God reecho his deep affiliation to God as his creator.

The Ndembu of Northwestern Zambia have an interesting communal approach to social integration worth sharing. Turner writes: "...the Ndembu are matrilineal and combine hoe agriculture with hunting...The Ndembu belong to a great congeries of West and Central African cultures."⁶⁵ The Ndembu have rituals for twins that bring people together and communicate communal support, cultural bonds and solidarity. Among the Ndembus:

...the mother of the twins, clad in a strip of bark cloth with a frontal flap of leather or cloth, and carrying a flat, round winnowing basket (Iwalu), makes the round of all the villages in a vicinage. As she dances she raises the flap to expose to all the source of her excessive fecundity, and solicits offering of food, clothing, and money by circling her basket before the onlookers.⁶⁶

In such cultural exhibition, the contributions of the whole village throw support on healthy communal interdependency that encourages brotherliness and mutual relationship with one another. However, they consider that "...the birth of twins is a source of classificatory

⁶⁴ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Rochester: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 47

⁶⁵ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 4

⁶⁶ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 45

embarrassment.”⁶⁷ An embarrassing situation brings about an attitude of disrespect for humanity. Therefore, Oquaye depicts that the respect for human being in the traditional African background is engraved in rights and obligations. Oquaye therefore asserts that, “In the traditional African set up, the attribute of respect for human being had societal implications and were deeply rooted in rights and obligations.”⁶⁸

The African cultural traditions conceive man to be components of three (3) entities. “...on the conception of a person (Onipa)” Owiredu stresses that “In this conception, the person was (and is still is) perceived as a union of three elements, the life principle (okra) believed to come directly from God through which a person’s destiny is determined, the blood principle (mogya), inherited from the mother; personality principle (sunsum) from father.”⁶⁹ In the African thought the complexity of the human person cannot be downplayed. “Out of each of these attributes emanated a set of human (individual) rights... by virtue of possessing ‘okra’ or a divine element, every person has an intrinsic value which he did not owe to any earthly circumstance. This entitled him in an equal measure to a certain basic respect, that is, the right to pursue the unique destiny assigned to him by God.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti- Structure*, 45

⁶⁸ Alexander K. D. Frempong, “Chieftancy, Democracy and Human Rights in Pre-Colonial Africa: The Case of Akan System in Ghana,” in *Chieftancy in Ghana: Culture Governance and Development*, ed. Irene K. Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba (Accra: Sub- Saharan Publishers, 2006), 387.

⁶⁹ Frempong, “Chieftancy, Democracy and Human Rights in Pre-Colonial Africa: The Case of Akan System in Ghana,” 387.

⁷⁰ Frempong, “Chieftancy, Democracy and Human Rights in Pre-Colonial Africa: The Case of Akan System in Ghana,” 387.

2.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSIDERATION IN CHOOSING COMMUNITY LEADERS IN AFRICAN CONTEXT, PWDs IN PERSPECTIVE

In most African societies, several considerations are factored before selecting a person into leadership position. It must be emphasized that, potential leaders are subjected to scrutiny before selection is done. In Ghana, community leaders are chosen with wide range of physical and behavioural considerations. For instance, the people of Upper-East place deep consideration in choosing successor to inherit either deceased or demoted community leader who shall represent the entire body of the community at functions, durbars, religious and other socio-political programs. Therefore, critical observations are not downplayed. Awedoba declares that “For most Upper- Eastern societies, the succession norms may take into consideration age and seniority, personal attributes including appearance and bearing, leadership qualities and capacity to empathise with others.”⁷¹ It is important in this discussion to lay emphasis on ‘personal attributes including appearance and bearing’ as Awedoba claims. In reference to the commonalities of most cultural practices in Ghana and for that matter Africa, Awedoba may not have explicitly mentioned what are factored in the ‘personal attributes’, yet it may also not exclude disabilities. Persons with bodily deviation are arguably not considered when choosing community leaders especially chiefs, kings and Queens irrespective of one’s intelligence and uprightness.

Similar to the tradition of the Wala of Wa, there are rules that govern a choice for a leader. For the Wa tradition, one qualifies by:

The rule of Seniority...by a subordinate Rule of Personal Suitability. A viable candidate should have shown himself

⁷¹ Awedoba A. K., “Modes of succession in the Upper East Region of Ghana,” in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture Governance and Development*, ed. Irene K. Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006), 412.

an able...Certain physical defects rule out candidacy, most notably (since so common) blindness. Al-Hajj Tamimu illustrated the point with reference to the election of Muhammad Bakuri as limam in 1965. 'When Limam Bukuri became limam' he said, 'it is true that there were two men older than him and we did not take them. But this was because both of them were blind, and so we couldn't make them imams: a blind man cannot lead the community. In 1960 many people expected Al-Hajj Tamimu himself to become limam at some future date, but he too became blind and thus disqualified.'⁷²

In simple terms, disability arguably rendered someone unable to perform. This supports why African traditional leaders seemingly appear with a sort of 'no physical bodily deviation'. There are observable instances where leaders who suffer any form of disability during leadership are replaced.

According to Olupona, the selection of a successor for a departed King among the *Ondo* of *Yuroba* tribe of Nigeria follows a critical personality assessment. The selection of a new *Osemawe Adekolurejo* takes into a considerable look at the physical and mental conditions.

Olupona educates that "...people agree that the candidate, in addition to being a male descendant from a ruling house, must be physically and mentally fit..."⁷³ This concept as implied in the physical consideration that sets barrier or denies a person or group of people of leadership opportunities due to bodily deviations. In this regard, one's intelligence or oratories do not even count or merit any appointment to leadership position. Such persons are viewed as 'blemished'.

One may not mince words to conclude that, the ill association with PWDs in the African customary dispositions such as selection of leaders may have impacted various religio-social institutions to date. This is in reference to the denial of PWDs employment, political positions,

⁷² Ivor Wilks, *Wa and Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*(New York : Cambridge University Press, 1989),70

⁷³ Jacob K. Olupona, *Kingship, Religion, and Rituals in a Nigerian Community: A phenomenological Study of Ondo Yoruba Festival* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991), 48.

and higher managerial positions in private establishments, among others until the enactment of the Disability Act 2006. Even with this enactment, the appointment of Hon. Seidu Daanaa, a visually impaired as Minister of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs in 2013 occasioned divided reaction on the media landscape. His appointment by President John Dramani Mahama in January 2013 in an attempt to create inclusive participation of all in governance in light of the Disability Act 2006 generated diverse opinions. As others applauded the initiative, many others were of the opinion that it was a deviation from cultural norms. His visual impairment was considered grounds of disregard to Ghanaian cultural norms since the Ghanaian traditional culture does not accept disability for leadership position.

There is one fundamental African Traditional doctrine that needs to be highlighted in this write-up and thus, concerns human destiny. Asare Poku suggests that:

The destiny of man is known as *nkrabea* by the Akan, the word is made up of the verb *kra*, to bid farewell or take leave of, and *Bea*, the way or manner of doing something. *Nkrabea* therefore means, literally, ‘the manner in which the soul bids farewell to *Onyame* before its departure into the world.’⁷⁴

With this traditional mindset, one would be eager to inquire whether disabilities are also a factor of one’s destiny or *nkrabea*. Would it necessarily confirm that a soul in consultation with *Onyame* opted to visit the world with disability? If so then there is much to be desired in relation to the segregation models that are employed in selecting community leaders since one’s *Nkrabea* is from God and that the “the destiny God has assigned you cannot be avoided, and *Nea Onyame ahyehye no, ɔdasani ntumi nman ani*. This notwithstanding, the practice of social segregation against PWDs continues to dominate our communal interactions.

⁷⁴ Asare Poku, *West African Traditional Religion*, 100.

However, in the Akan oral traditional, emphasis is placed on disabilities as detestable conditions that carry varied impressions. It is a sign of ‘*mmusu*’ in a person’s family line since Africans have a philosophy that *biribi nsi kwa* (literally translated: nothing happens by chance). There is always a belief in a remote cause of something in one’s life. This may intersect the ideological basis for the reasons why the disciples reasoned that sin might have resulted in the blindness of the boy when they asked Jesus “who sinned?” in reference to John 9:2. That may have a link with the biblical disposition of the disciples when they considered disability as a result of sin.

Personally, when we were growing up, we were guided not to make mockery of persons with disabilities since the particular disability could be transferred to our offspring. This created fear and sympathy was rather developed for PWDs. That could mean a societal superstitious belief that attempted to curb social disregard for PWDs.

2.4 DEROGATORY IDENTIFICATIONS, STATEMENTS AND SOCIAL STIGMA OF PWDs

A name is a person’s identity. In most cultures of the world, names are carefully given to signify a person’s permanent identification and to help trace one’s family lineage. Interestingly, in Ghana, names are given and most of the names have their corresponding meanings. These meanings, as believed, impact the life of the individual, hence serious considerations are undertaken before naming. It must be asserted that the *Akans* express this philosophy by saying “*wonto din kwa*”(lit. names are not given for giving sake).The Ewes of Ghana have a unique style of naming. This guides in the preservation of the family lineage. Therefore, family lineages are easily traced among Ewe. Names like Kudadzi, Okudjeto, Agbenyaga could easily identify the lineage that an Ewe person belongs.

More so, Ewe may not give a name to a child without meaning. There are others like *Mawuko* (meaning Only God), *Mawuto* (God's own). For instance, '*Ganu*' means 'Jewelry'. These names are carefully selected and are given to children.

However, an observation in most Ghanaian communities reveals that, there are often conditional names assigned to persons in consideration to a particular lifestyle, role or a disability. In most Ghanaian social environment, these conditional names depict either a role a person has played in the community, or a deviation of a particular body part from the natural order. These conditional names quite often than not overshadow the real names (names given at birth) and thereby become their social identity. In making special reference to disability, the challenging results are that such names are forced on the disadvantaged individuals and they are obliged under every circumstance to accept that social descriptive names. By experience, there are events that PWDs have objected to these derogatory names yet, they seem indelible. In smaller communal settings where the populace is not large, parents of such inflicted PWDs pay for 'gong-gong' to be beaten to annul such descriptive names, yet that marks the escalation of those names. Few of these conditional derogatory names include the below listed: *abafan or apakye* – (Akan) meaning: a cripple, *onifuraeni*-(Akan), the blind. *Asoti or Asotifoɔ*-(Akan), meaning: the deaf, *Mumu* (Akan) meaning: the Dump.

In a typical African society, these derogatory names quite often than not replace the original identifiable names of persons. Since they are descriptive, they quickly bring attention to a type of disability a person is plague with. In my native community, there is a woman who is born deaf and dumb. The community has until now referred to her as *Adwoa Mumu*. (Literally: *Adwoa* Dumb). *Adwoa* is a Monday born female in some cultures in Ghana including the Asante and

the akyem backgrounds. The *Mumu* refers to her disability, thus being a dumb. This socially descriptive name has erased her real name given at birth.

It is not quite out of place to suggest that these derogatory name calling is embedded in social mockery of PWDs. This is in the sense that they always single out the affected person and attention is called on him which in a greater extent promote social stigma. This may encourage withdraw of the affected person from social engagements, hence amounting to social disintegration.

2.5 BRIEF REVIEW OF SOME SELECTED PROVERBS AND ADAGES ON DISABILITIES

The use of proverbs and adages has been significant in African thoughts. They are locally coined wise sayings that are often employed to express indirect way of instruction through communication. They are wise sayings that are fashioned around everyday life activities, situations of life, disabilities, animal behaviour among others.

According to Addo "... proverbs in Africa are wise philosophical expressions, generally short and sometimes very funny yet make the language rich, picturesque, and expresses a hidden or obvious wisdom."⁷⁵ The Free Dictionary defines a Proverb as "... short pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept."⁷⁹ It is no doubt that proverbs are a representation of thoughts carefully knit to communicate situations and

⁷⁵ Peace Amate, Visual representation of selected Akan Proverbs in Ghana: Their philosophical and socio-cultural values, (MA Thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2011) <http://ir.knust.edu.gh/bitstream/123456789/2187/1/Peace%20thesis>. Cited, April 23, 2020. 12:19pm. ⁷⁹ The Free Dictionary, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/proverb>, cited: April 23, 2020, 12:40pm.

happenings indirectly. They do not necessarily give clear understandable information to receivers.

Considering this research bracket, it has become expedient to relate to few of these proverbs that are knit around disability and how they impact the life of PWDs:

i. *Abafan nim se ɔye oni nso na ɔsee ne to.* (Literally translated as: the cripple thinks he or she is disturbing the mother, he/she least expects that he/she is destroying the buttocks.)

This Akan Proverb could have varied application. However, the import suggests that as one thinks he or she is engaging in something to discredit others, there could be the other side which might cost him or her dearly. Other proverbs on disability could follow as below:

ii. *Yen mfa hwenpɔ aduro nnyɛ ananta.* (Literally translated, medicine used for nose ailment could not be used for crooked legs).

iii. *Onifuraeni se ɔbe to boɔ abɔ wo a, na ne nan si biribi so.* (Literally translated: if a blind person says he will throw a stone at you, then he would be standing on something).

iv. *Se wonnyini a, ensere akwatia.* (Literally translated: if you are not yet grown up, do not laugh at a short man).

v. *Ennye nwanwa se onifuraeni betɔ ahwehwe* (Literally translated: It is not strange for a blind man to buy a mirror).

vi. *Anifuraefo baanu nante a wɔtɔ amena mu* (Literally translated: When two blind persons walk together they fall into a ditch).

vii. *Onifuraeni mfa abufuw wɔ kwaemu* (Literally: the blind man does not get angry in the forest)

The emphasis to which the above proverbs are engaged in this work is not on the meanings or applications but rather the lingual expression and those around whom they are fashioned. A cripple who is painfully suffering this anomaly with no fault of his or hers might deeply regret

his or her status and may feel uncomfortable when his disability is used in everyday expressions. Normally, attention may be drawn to those persons and that might impede their desire for further public and social attractions and appearances which may affect activity involvement and integration.

2.6 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL BASES FOR PWD INTEGRATION

It is indisputable fact that, PWDs are components of every society. They form part of the vulnerable minority in every society. Unfortunately, their vulnerability often creates avenue for social disregard and abuse in any form. Due to their disadvantaged state, it has become a global convention to create enabling environment for PWDs to enhance their social fitness into communal life. This is a sort of protections that are guaranteed by global treaties.

In the African Charter on Human and People's Rights otherwise known as The Banjul Charter adopted and ratified by member states, space is created for the protection of human respect and dignity. This Charter was adopted on 27th June 1981 with OAU Document Reference CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58(1982). Under the protection of fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms are the following articles:

Article 4

“Human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right.”⁷⁶

Article 5

⁷⁶ <http://www.google.com/search?q=banjul+charter+pdf&oq=chater+pdf&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0i3>.

“Every individual shall have the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition of his legal status. All forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited.”⁷⁷

Ghana’s membership in some of these global associations mandates her to maintain global Charters that seek the Welfare and the protection of the vulnerable in the society. Hence, the constitution of Ghana further makes provisions that encapsulate Human Rights and protections but particularly for PWDs. The PWD Act, 2006 in the Constitution of Ghana presents the following provisions for PWDs:

- (i) Where a person with disability has to be put in a specialized establishment, the environment and living conditions of the establishment shall, except as otherwise required by the condition of the person with disability, be as close as possible to those of a person without disability of the same age as the person with disability.*
- (ii) The owner or occupier of a place to which the public has access shall provide appropriate facilities that make the place accessible to and available for use by a person with disability.*
- (iii) A person who provides service to the public shall put in place the necessary facilities that make the service available and accessible to a person with disability.*
- (iv) A person with disability shall not be deprived of the right to live with that person’s family or the right to participate in social, political, economic, creative or recreational activities.*
- (v) A person who employs a person with disability shall provide:*

⁷⁷ <http://www.google.com/search?q=banjul+charter+pdf&oq=chater+pdf&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0i3>.

a. The relevant working tools, and

b. Appropriate facilities required by the person with disability for the efficient performance of the functions required by the employer.

(vi) The Ministries responsible for rail, air, and road transport and where appropriate the Ministry of Local government shall ensure that the needs of persons with disability are taken into account in design, construction and operation of the transportation network.

(vii) A person shall not call a person with disability derogatory names because of the disability of the person.⁷⁸

Importantly, the constitutional provisions as outlined above set the tone for the management of PWDs in Ghana. As a constitutional requirement, all persons, associations, religious groups, institutions, and all establishments are required under the Law to take steps necessary for effective integration of PWDs into social, economic and political activities of society. Interestingly, the Constitution makes provision for punitive actions in case the above provisions are contravened. This is an indication that matters relating to the integration of PWDs are considered priority in Ghana.

⁷⁸ <http://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/international-disability-right/international-laws/Ghana-disabled-persons-act>. Accessed, Sunday October 25, 2020 at 16: 20 GMT.

CHAPTER THREE

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND DISABILITY SUPPORT INITIATIVES

IN GHANA, A REVIEW

3.0 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

3.0.1 The Millerite Movement

The Seventh-day Adventist church is a global religious organization founded in the mid- 19th century by a group of people from various religious affiliations. They trace their beginnings from the Millerite Movement (1839 and 1844). This group was formed by break-away individuals from the Protestant groups of the time. The passion of the Millerite Movement was to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ through public lectures and the use of the print media. “On February 28, {1840}, The Signs of the Times, the first newspaper designed to advertise Miller’s views and to stimulate discussions of the Second Advent, appeared.”⁷⁹ William Miller and his companions projected the coming of Jesus Christ as very soon. Among them was Joshua V.

Himes: “Not only did he (Himes) help secure Miller’s repeated return to Boston, but he also arranged for him to visit New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. In February 1840, during Miller’s third series of lectures in Boston, Himes began another method of publicizing the ‘Advent near.’”⁸⁰

The Millerite group extended the passion of heralding the Second Advent of Christ to pronouncing a specific time of Jesus’ return:

For some time, many of Miller’s followers had been pressing him to define the time he expected the Advent more exactly than simply ‘about the year 1843...They believed that Christ’s second advent was imminent; that it

⁷⁹ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church* (Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association,2000),36

⁸⁰ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 36, 41

would be literal, visible event, and would precede His millennial reign. They believed that just as the time of Christ's first advent had been foretold in the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9, so His second advent was meant in Daniel 8:14's reference to the cleansing of the sanctuary at the end of 2300 days.⁸¹

Interestingly, the projected date for the Second Advent could not materialized hence, "some gave up their advent hope"⁸²

Nonetheless, Samuel Sheffield Snow pronounced the birth of The Seventh-Month Movement after the 1843 disappointment:

Snow's intensive study of the Mosaic tabernacle and Jewish festival types convinced him that Christ would return at the time of the Jewish Day of Atonement, in the seventh month of the year. This would be in the fall rather than spring 1844...Snow became more energetic in promoting the 'tenth day of the seventh month. By Karaite reckoning this day would come on October 22.⁸³

Therefore, October 22, 1844 became a fixed date for which the Seventh-Month Movement expected Christ's return. It must be recorded that:

the righteous were to flee to major cities as Lot had fled from Sodom...Nevertheless, perhaps 150 to 200 of approximately 3000 advent believers in Philadelphia journeyed to about four miles into the country to await the advent.⁸⁴

"The young church which was first confined to the United States and Canada was enthusiastically expecting the Lord's imminent return."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 40, 41.

⁸² Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 42.

⁸³ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 48.

⁸⁴ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 49.

⁸⁵ Francis Opoku, "The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana: Some Aspects of Its History and Development from 1864-2000" (M. Phil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2003), 12.

On October 22, 1844, the prediction of Christ's Second Advent fell on rocks hence, there arose among the faithful a much greater disappointment. "They were devastated. 'Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted', Hiram Edson remembered, 'and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.'"⁸⁶

The Sabbath keeping experience is recorded to have been introduced by Frederick Wheeler to a new group of Adventists who held to the faith of awaiting the Second Advent of Christ. After the 1844 disappointment,

Frederick Wheeler, a Methodist farmer-minister of Hillsboro, New Hampshire, began keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath. His action resulted from a contact with a Seventh Day Baptist laywoman...Wheeler became convinced that God still wanted His children to honor the seventh day and began to keep it as the Sabbath⁹¹

Wheeler's seventh day Sabbath keeping advocacy infested other individuals like Rachel Oakes, William and Cyrus Farnsworth, T. B. Preble and J.B. Cox. Even though T. B. Preble returned to his Sunday worship, his connection with J.B. Cook on the Sabbath truth was extended to Joseph Bates and John Nevins Andrews. Joseph Bates and J. N. Andrews conviction led to the conversion of "hundreds more, including James and Ellen White and Hiram Edson. The consistency in Bible study and prayer paved the way for the small Seventh day Sabbath keeping groups to appreciate the fact that, the October, 22, 1844 disappointment meant that Christ had "moved from the first apartment of the sanctuary to the second (the Most Holy Place)" ⁹² for His mediatorial work for mankind. Gradually, the faith of these new members was firmly gripped

⁸⁶ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 49. ⁹¹ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 56. ⁹² Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 60

and they used several other publications such as *The Opening Heavens, Second Advent Waymarks and High Heaps, A Word to the 'little Flock* to share their new found faith. As a growing society, there arose the need to identify them. There were therefore varied names that were proposed. There were struggles in an attempt to adopt a convenient name that would make the group unique. Among the proposal made for the naming of the group were ‘Seventh-day People, Seventh-day Doorshutters, Sabbath- Keeping Adventists, Shut-door Seventh-day Sabbath and Annihilationists, the Church of God.’⁸⁷ Finally, “delegates favored a name that would quickly identify the major doctrines held. What better name than Seventh-day Adventist? It had been applied to them as much as any other and had the virtue of clearly identifying the chief biblical truths they proclaimed. David Hewitt finally seized the initiative and moved the adoption of Seventh-day Adventist.”⁸⁸ Kofi Owusu-Mensa supports the facts with the conclusion that “The year 1863 is a significant one in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church Movement. Organized Seventh-day Adventist Church work as one entity formally began in May, that year in Battle Creek, Michigan, United States of America.”⁸⁹

It is relevant to state that the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception have experienced most founding members who were PWDs. Typical among them is Ellen Gould Hammond (popularly known in the SDA circle as Ellen Gould White). Ellen White suffered from partial visual impairment from birth. However, she has remained one of the greatest contributors to the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was considered a prophetess of the church whose contributions have since shaped the SDA Church in terms of upholding true Biblical doctrines.

⁸⁷ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 91.

⁸⁸ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: History of the Seventh-day Adventist church*, 92.

⁸⁹ Kofi Owusu-Mensa. *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History*(Accra: Advent press, 2005), 7

3.0.2 THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN GHANA: A BRIEF NARRATIVE

The Seventh-day Adventist church was established in Ghana in 1888. Historical facts hinge the establishment of the church on two personalities: Francis Dolphjn and William Kweku Atta Dawson. According to Owusu-Mensa, “Pioneer Dawson of Fetteh and Mayenda is virtually unsung in General Conference official documents on Adventism in Ghana, but tradition and the monumental churches and believers at Fetteh and Mayenda are too clear evidences of Dawsonism in Ghana Seventh-day Adventist history to deny or ignore.”⁹⁰ However Owusu-Mensa indicates that, “Pioneer Dolphijn is clearly documented in the story of early Ghana Adventism, but poorly so in oral tradition, and even more sadly, there was no church in his hometown of Apam with which he could be remembered decades after his demise.” The above is just to introduce the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the soils of Ghana.

The church has currently expanded to many parts of Ghana with two (2) major administrative blocks namely; the Northern Ghana Union Mission and the Southern Ghana Union Conference. The Southern Sector, where the concentration of this study resides is made up of ten (10) Conferences and two (2) Missions. They are Eastern View Ghana Conference- Nkawkaw, Diamond Field Ghana Conference- Asamankese, East Ghana Conference- Koforidua, Accra City Conference- Accra, Pioneer Ghana Conference, Agona Swedru, Meridian Ghana Conference- Tema Mid-South Ghana Conference- Cape coast, South West Ghana conference- Takoradi, West –Central Ghana conference- Tarkwa, Western North Ghana Conference- Sefwi Wiawso, Oti Ghana Mission- Jasikan and Volta Ghana Mission –Ho.

⁹⁰ Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History*, 14.

Interestingly, the Pioneer Ghana Conference which is the scope of this work has a geographical environment that covers the original environments of the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; thus, Apam and Gomoa Fetteh.

3.1 THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH AND PWDs

A search into the Seventh-day Adventist church's belief system has revealed that the organization seems to have broadened her religious horizon to a state that drives minds to be disengaged in any thought of discrimination especially against PWDs. As an organization, there is a responsibility to create enabling environment to serve all members especially those who have been rejected by the society. Mendonca and Kanungo posit that "organization serves human being well. The family, the school, religious institution- all play a pivotal role in the development of the human being from helpless infant to an independent, mature, and morally responsible adult."⁹¹ Sustenance of PWDs in an organization is one of the positive marks in the world today. To the benefit of the organization, it underpins the expression of care and the desire to prompt the maintenance of integrity for all equal irrespective of the physical state on the individual.

To ascertain the consciousness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the integration of PWD, this work reviews six (6) major areas of concern. They are (i). The Core messages of the church and the target group (ii) the working policies of the church, (iii) Employment of PWDs as denominational workers (iv) Promotion of integration and inclusiveness through music, (v).

Technological support to members who are disabled and (vi) Theological position of the Seventh-day Adventists Church on PWDs.

⁹¹ Mendonca and Kanungo, *Ethical leadership*, 1

3.1.1 (I) The Core Message of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Target Group

The central Theme of the Seventh-day Adventist church revolves around the Three Angels' Message (3AM) as indicated earlier. The message encapsulates the key focus that drives the evangelical wheels of the entire church structure. The notion draws attention especially to the target group of the message. It is important to note that central to the Advent Message is the "everlasting gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6). Key target of the Advent message captures every nation, kindred, tongue and people. There is a purposeful idea that seems to suggest that there is no boundary as far as access to the Advent Message is concerned.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that she has a world to reach with a message and to extend God's mercy to all hence, E. G. White, a prolific writer for the church remarked, "Multitudes will be called to a wider ministry. The whole world is opening to the gospel. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God. From Japan and China and India ..." ⁹² The import of the message is to reach out all corners of the world. Segregation against certain class of people has no place in the core mission of the church. 'All people' (which might necessarily bring into focus PWDs also) are the prime target group of the church's evangelistic ministry. It is therefore considered a sacred responsibility to include all persons for spiritual nourishment.

In The Adults Sabbath School study guide, a quarterly lessons release for church study titled The Least of These, there is an affirmation that "Seventh-day Adventists are called to proclaim 'the everlasting gospel' (Rev 14:6) to all the world. By so doing, we (the church) are simply obeying Jesus' words about making disciples, baptizing them, and "teaching them to observe all

⁹² Ellen G. White, *Education: Learning from the Master Teacher* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995), 164.

things that I (Jesus) had commanded you.”⁹³ A portion of the same document further stresses on the condition that “Jesus healed diseases, gave sight to the blind, cured lepers, and even raised the dead...When we care for the poor and the oppressed, we are actually offering honor and worship to God... But if we fail to minister in behalf of the hurting, the suffering, and the broken, we misrepresent Him.”⁹⁴

PWDs according to the church structure are unrestricted members of the Seventh-day Adventist church system. A way is paved to receive people under every circumstance. A picture is thereby painted reechoing the inclusion of all persons from all socio-cultural backgrounds.

3.1.2 (ii) The Working Policy of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church On PWDs.

It must be emphasized that the working policy manual for the church outlines the church’s priorities in the incorporation of PWDs and takes keen interest in setting out modalities to meet their spiritual, physical and social needs. In view of the special interest accorded PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist church, a special ministry was discovered commissioned to oversee the arrangements and management of PWDs. The manual stipulates that the Personal ministries department, a subsidiary of the church responsible for witnessing to the unreached, plans to reach out to PWDs. It points clearly that the special ministry created to attend to the needs of PWDs “functions under the personal ministries council and develops programs for members and others with disabilities. [The ministry is to] create witnessing programs, recommend how to make church facilities more accessible, help solve transportation problems, and recommend ways to

⁹³ “The Least of These, Ministering to those in need,” 2.

⁹⁴ “The Least of These, Ministering to those in need,” 2

involve members with disabilities.”⁹⁵ This special subsidiary Department is referred in the Church Manual as the Special Needs Department- SND (now Possibility Ministry). According to the church’s structure, the Possibility Ministry has been created to facilitate the inclusion of PWDs into the church family. It has among others a sole responsibility to unearth the interest of PWDs to fully be included and participate in church activities. The department has responsibilities of educating, harmonizing and preparing enabling environment to receive PWDs. Furthermore, the SND (Possibility Ministry):

Coordinates its outreach under the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, exists to teach and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to people with special needs... the Special Needs Ministries focuses on those with disabilities. Training and promotion materials are provided through AdventSource and the Adventist Book Center to support the mission of including people with special needs in all areas of church life. ⁹⁶

Undoubtedly, the action plan for PWDs has not been shelved but rather has been clearly stipulated for operation. This gives a gist on the church's religio-social policy enactments to regulate the life and Spiritual gift of PWDs than to push them to the background. As part of their action plan, “Adventist Possibility Ministries seeks to bring wholeness to all in a world that is broken...a rediscovery of a person’s completeness in God”⁹⁷ Karen and Ron Flowers et al suggest in Christian Marriage Week readings titled *Adam’s Peace* that “...we live just as a family, gradually forgetting who is handicapped and who is not. All have their gifts, all have

⁹⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist church Manual* 19th Edition (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2015), 102.

⁹⁶ Fran Chaffee Grossenbacher, *Keys to Special Needs Ministries, Hidden Disabilities* (Lincoln: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2015), 4.

⁹⁷ A summery purpose statement: Adventist Possibility Ministries, Adventistpossibilityministries.org. Accessed on Thursday September 24, 2020 at 9:06pm.

their struggles. We eat together, play together, pray together, and go out together.”⁹⁸ This suggests a proactive resuscitation of PWDs into the church environment. Larry R. Evans, the Global coordinator of Special Needs Department at the church’s headquarters in the United States in a speech at a Global Conference on Health and Lifestyle at Loma Linda University on Thursday morning, July 11, 2019 remarked:

We’re to bring wholeness to all in a world that is broken...According to Evans, in various American cities laws were enacted and enforced, making it a crime for those with obvious deformities to be seen in major public areas. [He added that] ... these city ordinances were called ‘ugly laws.’ Chicago was the last to repeal an ugly law in 1974.⁹⁹

In essence, these laws were enacted to restrict PWDs from social engagements. It could be said that it was a calculate attempt to infringe on the rights of those who were living with deformities. Highlighting these heinous crimes against humanity presupposes that the Seventh-day Adventist church seemed to align with the abolishing of disability restriction laws termed *ugly laws*. The entrenchment of such enactments signaled also the elimination of persons with deformities which were potentially suicidal. In reference to Ellen G. White, Larry alluded asserted that;

It is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church. It is to prove His people and develop their true character...Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these people who need our sympathy, love, And disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of character¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Henri Nouwen, *Adam’s Peace in facing family Crisis: Supporting One Another*, Keren and Ron Flowers(n.a, n.a, 1999),14

⁹⁹ Larry R. Evans, “Disabilities are not Barriers but Possibilities...”, A speech at a Global Conference on Health and Lifestyle at Loma Linda University on Thursday morning, July 11, 2019, Published on 07-15-2019. Source:www.adventistworld.org. accessed 28-04-2020 at 11:26am.

¹⁰⁰ Larry R. Evans, “Disabilities are not Barriers but Possibilities...”, A speech at a Global Conference on Health and Lifestyle at Loma Linda University on Thursday morning, July 11, 2019, Published on 07-15-2019. Source:www.adventistworld.org. accessed 28-04-2020 at 11:26am

The above statement brought to fore a sentimental interest in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that communicated the establishment of healthy rapport between all persons despite the social stature. Christian institution would cease to reflect their true calling if they encourage acts that promote segregation among human beings.

3.1.3 (iii) Promotion of Integration and Inclusiveness Through Music: The SDA Church

Music was discovered as meaningful tool among the Seventh-day Adventists' worship aids. It is believed among the SDAs that music has the tendency of elucidating the core values of life and human existence. It has other features that encourage peaceful co-existence, integration and inclusiveness and they form part of communicating the theological ideals of the church. Therefore, a review of the Seventh-day Adventist's Hymnal brought to light a cohesive-oriented musical lyric that introduce unity and integration to members in their Christian endeavours. The introductory section of the SDA hymnal unfolds the power of music. They believe that music presents "... a keener awareness of the church's place and mission in the world, a fresh knowledge of God's will for each life, and a preparation for our Lord's second coming."¹⁰¹ More importantly, music is described among the SDA members as a vehicle that offloads inspiration and builds togetherness. This is believed to be a major cohesive factor that impresses upon shunning any act that appears discriminatory. They pave ways for selfless appreciation to God and for the purpose of religio-social bonding. Members view music as a cohesive factor that sensitizes them on the need to live for one another. It has the tendency to inculcate an unabridged inclusion of all persons into religio- social life of the church. Stefani claims that "{music} has a life-enhancing and life-changing message for the spiritual, mental, physical,

¹⁰¹ *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 5.

social and emotional facets of humanity.”¹⁰² In this regard, the SDA Church uses music assiduously as a partner that drive integration and religious inclusivity.

The church believes that Music plays a unifying role and that enhances integration. Entry into the various groups that perform singing functions in the church was seen as not limited to able body persons. An observation conducted by the researcher impressed the idea of singers voluntarily associating with any group of their choice. They were united by passion, dedication, and the exercise of their religious functions. As observed, the various singing groups at Pioneer Ghana conference were a mixture of PWDs and Non-PWDs.

Furthermore, the researcher took keen interest to review the import of communicating integration and inclusiveness with the lyric of Seventh-day Adventist Songs. Few of the SDA Hymns and song were reviewed. For instance, SDAH 587;

In Christ there is no east nor west,
In Him no south or north; But one
Great fellowship of love
Throughout The whole wide earth.

By induction, the central theme of the above hymn attempts to communicate unity and heightens the emphasis on brotherliness. Alternatively, it has an instinct of promoting all-inclusive religious experience. By inference, the church heightens the integration of all brethren through lyrics of songs. Another hymn that caught the attention of the research is SDAH 350:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love!
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

¹⁰² Wolfgang H. M. Stefani, “Is Music Morally Neutral?” in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends In the Church*, ed. Samuel Koranteng- Pipim (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Graphics, 2005), 414.

In other lyrics of an Adventist Hymn reviewed, the writer seems to imply the extension of invitation to all who wish to be closer to God, an invitation that prompts every lover of Christ to beckon to the throne where they could unite, fellowship and coexist as a family. The ‘all’ communicate an idea of doing away with all barriers that promote segregation and disintegration. The song draws all believers’ attention to a closer walk with God in an assembly of all to a common place for reunion, inclusive ministry and church-family bonding. SDAH 422 follows as below:

Come we that love the Lord
And let our joys be known
Join in a song with sweet accord
Join in a song with sweet Accord
And thus surround

theThrone.

3.1.4 (iv) Employment of PWDS as Denominational Workers

The researcher attempted to review the employment opportunities for PWDs as denominational worker in the SDA Church. Interestingly, few workers were spotted in the various institutions and administration of the church working as denominational workers and who suffered from one type of disability or another. Though not quite many PWDs were found, there were no church document discovered that hindered the employment of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist church. As a religious institution, the campaign to positively influence the inclusion of PWDs was identified as a matter of concern in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This was seen to be in response to the initiatives of governments and other social institutions’ preparedness to actively engage PWDs in all facets of social life to minimize the stigma of PWDs.

However, at Pioneer Ghana conference the researcher rarely identified a Pastor with any form of disabilities. This signaled the researcher to investigate into the reasons which had necessitated the absence of PWDs among the Pastoral staff at Pioneer Ghana Conference. The Seventh-day

Adventist Church manual asserts that:

Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God ¹⁰³

Hence there is a high expectation to acknowledge the presence of PWDs in the Pastoral machinery of the church. The unavailability of church documents barring the engagement of PWDs needs to be associated with other socio- cultural views to juxtapose the link between the two.

In an interview with a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana Conference who was a PWD, he shared his initial interest in becoming a Pastor. He concluded that he was counseled to stay at the office and to support the treasury department based on his disability. He secured employed, yet with different assignment either than Pastoring. It would be difficult to comprehend the church's role in promoting disability inclusion in all aspects of church life but fails to honour same on the Pastoral platforms.

3.1.5 (V) Technological Support for PWDS in The Seventh-Day Adventist Church

An investigation at the Southern Ghana Union Conference, the headquarter of the church in the Southern part of Ghana disclosed a purchase of Braille Machine to support the printing of

¹⁰³ *Seventh-day Adventist Church manual* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015),20-21.

Christian literature; Hymns, Sabbath School lesson and other Christian literature for the visually impaired. This, according to the church, is a way of bringing relieve to PWDs to be fully integrated into church services and activities. PWDs are in the minority but forms part of church membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to the Director of Health at the SDA Church headquarters in Accra, the Braille Machine costing thousands of Dollars was purchased to assist the church in her desire to bring PWDs on board so we serve the Lord together and to instigate the involvement of PWDs in all church activities. However, further interrogation proved that the Braille machine was not functioning due to a damaged part for over a long period of time due to the pressure on it. The Braille Machine serves the twelve fields under the Southern Ghana Union Conference.

Interestingly, Pioneer Ghana conference, where this research was conducted was among these twelve fields living under the mercy of one Braille Machine.

Nevertheless, a close observation has indicated that the Church has attempted to introduce sign language interpreters to the church's major media evangelism dubbed *Encounter with Truth* (EWT). This evangelistic program is aired on Ghana Television (GTV) every Sunday between 6:30am and 7:00am. The program is believed to be a media Bible engagement where all persons are encouraged to pay attention. The church attempts to use to medium to reach the world with the Advent Message. In order to include all people, the church has employed different interpreters who are well versed in the sign language skills to transmit the import of every message to PWDs, especially those with hearing impairments. Similarly, the Special Needs Director at the Southern Ghana Union Conference of SDA confidently unveiled the initiative of the leadership in training Sign Language instructors to support the interpretation of sermons and other communications to those with hearing impairments in all churches. This he remarked

“would serve the purpose of bridging the gap between PWDs and the able bodied persons and to sustain the membership of PWDs.”

3.1.6 (Vi) The Theological Position of the Seventh-Day Adventist On PWDs

Theologically, the research attempted to investigate whether there were any Biblical bases that the church has adopted as the yardstick to segregate against PWDs. In an interview with the Executive Secretary of the Southern Ghana Union Conference of SDA, he concluded that the church has not formulated any theological caveat to partition PWDs from others in the church setting but rather, the church seeks to bring all persons on board for a healthy religious experience. This suggests that the SDA Church has no documented theological position on disabilities.

There was no clear justification Biblically therefore to reduce the interest of the church in matters relating to PWDs. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has no challenging scriptural interpretation to delineate PWDs. Hence, this creates a premise for this study to conclude that the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has no theological disposition to segregate, disintegrate or stigmatize against PWDs. All PWDs are placed under the same religious pedestal as the non-PWDs. The Pioneer Ghana conference therefore has instituted all measure within her reach to encourage the participation of PWDs into the church structure.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES INTO THE SEVENTH- DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH SYSTEM

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The challenges of Person with Disabilities (PWDs) have attracted numerous global reactions ranging from political, socio-cultural and religious dimensions. The desire to ascertain the inclusion of PWDs in these facets of community life draws attention to occasional inconveniences that either affect Persons with Disabilities themselves or the community that attempt to absorb them into social life.

The Possibility Ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was considered to be focusing primarily on persons who are plagued with hearing impairments, visual impairments, irregular physical mobility, mental challenges, orphans, spousal losses and caregivers. However, this research focuses on only three (3) aspects that The Possibility Ministries takes responsibilities for. These are hearing impairments, visual impairments and members with irregular physical movements. It is important to reemphasize that all persons were created in the image of God and thus, must have the opportunity to fit into all aspect of Religio-social life of every society.

However, the research attempted to penetrate the church environments to ascertain how PWDs in the confines of the Seventh-day Adventist church were supported through properly laid integrative measures. The ensuing discussions reflect the responses of the interviewees who were composed of: four (4) PWDs, three (3) Church members of the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana Conference and three (3) leaders in Church Administration at Pioneer Ghana Conference. Due to the sensitivity of the research, the researcher attempted to assign

codes to the interviewees to maintain high score of anonymity. The interviews attempted to elucidate the challenges of Inclusion that PWDs faced in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church system and the pragmatic steps laid by the Pioneer Ghana Conference to avert these inclusive challenges. The assigned codes included the below: Person with Disability 1 (PWD 1), Person with Disability 2 (PWD 2), Person with Disability 3 (PWD 3), and Person with Disability 4 (PWD 4). Others included Church member 1 (CM 1), Church Member 2 (CM 2) and Church Member 3 (CM 3). Those interviewed from the administration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were coded as below: Church Officer 1 (CO 1), Church Officer 2 (CO 2) and Church Officer 3 (CO 3).

Similarly, focus group discussions were employed among the tools used to gather data for analysis and discussion. The groups were coded as below: Focus Group Discussion 1 (FG 1), Focus group Discussion 2 (FG 2), Focus Group Discussion 3 (FG 3), Focus Group Discussion 4 (FG 4), Focus Group Discussion 5 (FG 5) and Focus Group Discussion 6 (FG 6). Among the areas that the researcher explored were:

- Involvement of persons with disabilities in church leadership and pastoral ministry.
- Availability of disability support logistics and gadgets in local churches of the Seventh-day Adventist church.
- Reading material on braille.
- Availability of disability friendly pews and wheel chairs.
- Sign Language interpreters.
- Financial support to PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist church.
- Sensitization programmes on disabilities: Seminars and workshops on social adjustment of PWDs.

- Engagement of PWDs in church programs and activities: The case of structural obstacles.

4.1 INVOLVEMENT OF PWDs IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

It is worth noting that well planned organizations have structures that carefully support the realization of the organizational goals. Organizations that suffer structural deficiencies least achieve their desired goals. Mendonca and Kanungo are of the view that, “organizations have a structure; organizational members assume or are assigned different tasks, roles, and status levels in the organization in order to achieve this purpose efficiently and effectively.”¹⁰⁴ The support that members in every organization give leads to the success of achieving the organizational goals. Definitely, the contributions of all members in every organization or establishments are not to be downplayed. Each person has a unique way that could assist in the realization of group goals. The one who could not exert any physical contribution based on any physical challenges could share with the organization other important experiences that might facilitate greater bonding for successful organizational sustenance.

A review of the Seventh-day Adventist church Manual brought afore the stages of the administrative structures within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Globally, the church operates under six (6) major administrative stages: It begins with the local church administration to the higher organization. They include: Local church, District, Conferences/Missions, Unions, Divisions, and the General Conference church administrations.

¹⁰⁴ Mendonca and Kanungo, *Ethical leadership*, 2

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church policy, local church leadership nominations are conducted either annually or biennially. Leaders are selected from the floor of the church and every baptized member qualifies to take leadership role(s) in the church. The position of an Elder ranks next to the Local church or District Pastor. Other departmental position such as Deacon, Clerk, treasurer, Youth Leader, Interest Coordinator, Women's Ministries leader, Music Coordinator, publishing leader, Health Ministries Leader, Possibility Ministries' leader and among others are available in the local church administrative structure. All persons in good standing qualify to take any responsibility of the available leadership roles.

However, according to the *Church Manual*, there are certain general considerations that are outlined in the church policy that guide in the selection of leaders. These include; moral and religious fitness, ability to feed and guard the church with the right doctrinal teachings, respect for pastors and church officers, ability to interpret church policies and beliefs and the frantic effort to cooperate with church's organizational policies. In the outlined consideration for nomination into leadership position, the researcher identified a coherent agreement with the Pauline counsel which never pointed to disability as a yardstick for disqualification into any church office. Paul asserted that:

A bishop [elder] then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1Tim 3:1-8)

In the above consideration, part of the research findings centred on the involvement of PWD in church administration. According to the church policy, church leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist church is not contended on the basis of able-bodiedness or on disabled considerations but rather through nominations by a selected body referred to as *The Nominating Committee*. The interviews conducted brought about varied opinions on the inclusion of PWDs into church leadership.

According to PWD 1, PWDs were reluctantly selected into church leadership. PWD 1's assertion was based on the claim that after nominating him as a church elder in 2012 church year, his name was removed from the leadership position that he supposedly merited in the sitting of the Nominating Committee of His local church. After the presentation of *the First Reading* to the church, PWD 1 confirmed his joy of chance to work as a church leader. According to PWD 1, when the *second reading* to confirm the nominated church leaders and to subsequently vote on them his name was missing in the leadership. PWD 1 expressed his disappointment by asserting that "the church treated me unfairly"¹⁰⁵ In an attempt to probe into the reasons that surrounded PWD 1's removal from the list of leaders, he stressed that he could not figure out the main reason for his removal but to conclude that "*may be they thought that because 'am blind I cannot lead the church as an elder.*"¹⁰⁶ The speculative answer given by PWD 1 suggested that there was poor communication network and that necessitated the varied reason that PWD 1 conceived. The researcher considered it important to review the modalities set for the rejection of a nominee into leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to the church Manual:

appropriate member of the committee should inform them (the nominees) of their nominations and secure their consent to serve. Members may object to the nominating

¹⁰⁵ Interview with PWD 1, Wednesday July 1, 2020 at 3:15 pm.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with PWD 1

committee's report and should present their objections in person to the committee before the second reading.¹⁰⁷

The direction of the manual indicated that, when a nominee was opposed by any church member on grounds of any hidden sin or any issue relating to capabilities, the opposing member was to appear before the Nominating committee to indicate his or her displeasure in the appointee. Since PWD 1 was not duly informed of the reasons for his exclusion in the team of church leaders, the researcher identified a communication lapse which gave room for PWD 1 to speculate about his rejection. In an opposing view, CO 1 confirmed that the church has a principle of dealing with erred members whose names appear during Nominating Committee's sittings based on the Biblical Principle in Matthew 18:15-17 that stated that:

Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear [thee, then] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

However, PWD 1 mentioned that none of the church leaders visited him to prompt him of any identified waywardness and therefore concluded that he was rejected on the basis of his visual impairment. The position of PWD 1 suggested that members limited his capability on the basis of his disability so long as there was no communication whatsoever that attempted to indicate the reasons for his removal from the leadership list.

Furthermore, PWD 2 confirmed that he had had numerous opportunities to serve in various leadership capacities in the Seventh-day Adventist church. PWD 2 emphasized that he started serving in various leadership roles few years after his local church identified his potentials.

¹⁰⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist church Manual* (19th Edition), 112, 113.

However, PWD 2 recounted his disappointment that after his Ministerial Training as a Pastor from the seminary, he was denied the role as a Pastor. PWD 2 indicated that when he completed Pastoral training at the Seminary, he applied to one of the conferences in Ghana with full assurance that he would realize his dream as a trained Pastor. According to PWD 2, he was employed however, on condition that he would serve in another department other than a field Pastor. He emphasized that the administrators of the Conference convinced him to wholeheartedly accept to work under the Accounts department on grounds that his disability would restrict him to work on the field as a district or church Pastor. According to PWD 2, the claims of his employers were based on the *'tedious nature of the field work juxtaposing his disability'*. PWD 2 alluded that, the officers confided in him that they could not ascertain the preparedness of the local churches if they would fully accept and integrate him into that high office of the church. PWD 2 stated that though the administrators thought they were considering and sympathizing with him on those grounds, yet that was his worse disappointment. PWD 2 indicated in the interview that, he channeled his displeasure through one of his friends who was a worker in that Conference for consideration into full time ministry and he remarked that "no one seemed to reason with me"¹⁰⁸ When the researcher attempted to review whether his interest in Pastoral ministry persisted, he confirmed that "even now if I get the opportunity I will join the Pastoral Ministry and accept to work in any district where my services would be needed."¹¹⁵ Similarly, some church members were interviewed to review their preparedness to accept and integrate PWDs in their local churches and Districts. On that score, CM 1 responded that since there were no biblical and theological considerations that bar PWDs into church leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist church, there was that positive perception that churches could be ready to

¹⁰⁸ Interview with PWD 2, Thursday July 2, 2020 at 1:26pm

accept and integrate PWDs into church leadership even as Pastors. CM 2 admitted that he had not identified a Seventh-day Adventist Pastor who was either having a serious hearing or visual impairment in Ghana but was hopeful that the church was ready to work with such individuals since they were also created in the image and likeness of God. CM 2's only concern was related to how the visually impaired adopted Pastors could lead church services like Baptism, visitations, and the other religious sacraments. CM 2 appeared more considerate when he suggested that, the church could do PWDs more good when they were not engaged in "demanding leadership roles and services" which could stress them. CM 2 was of the view that in nominating leaders for the church, care should be taken in order not to select PWDs into demanding church leadership offices where visitation could be an important factor. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership, visitation of members is one of the key roles that members cannot afford to miss. Visitation is one of the means by which church leaders are able to identify the needs of members for consideration and redress.

Guidelines for the selection of church leaders are available in the church Manual. It indicates that the Nominating Committee must "study the needs of the church and inquire into the *fitness* of members to serve in the different offices"¹⁰⁹ The researcher attempted to review the keyword *fitness* as suggested by the church policy Manual and to analyze how the word properly makes sense in the context of the church. According to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, *Fitness* means "the condition of being physically strong and healthy." This prompted the researcher to speculate that disabilities more often than not render persons physically not strong and healthy hence that could suggest that PWDs might not have space in the leadership structures in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. CM 3 objected to the notion that PWDs were

¹⁰⁹ Interview with PWD 2

not important in church administration in the Seventh-day Adventist church. However, CM 3 indicated that the term ‘fitness’ had a contextual meaning which was not limited to strength and health but also moral fitness and adequacy in well groomed behavioural dispositions. CM 3 further stressed that in as much as the church has no such policy that hinders PWDs from playing leadership roles, in her opinion the church seemed not ready to engage PWDs in key church leadership positions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She reiterated that “PWDs were not readily seen playing active roles in her local church than to task them with huge leadership burdens.”¹¹⁰ The researcher queried the roles that her local church leaders had played in drawing PWDs to participate in local church leadership and activities. Unfortunately, CM 3 could not state any initiative that her local church had instituted to engage PWDs. The researcher discovered that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had limited disability empowerment plans for PWDs in leadership.

Leadership empowerment modules described among others the appropriate means to encourage persons to contribute their quota to the development of societies. In leadership empowerment plans, capacity building, emotional bonding and the realization of fulfilled leadership dream is key. PWDs need such empowerment guides to elevate their quest to contribute their best in religio-social development. According to Northhouse “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group to achieve a common goal.”¹¹¹ Hence leadership does not necessarily mean identifying only a person playing all roles in a given organization. It was therefore expedient to indicate in this write-up that leadership is not limited to sole public display especially persons who assumed the frontal roles but also those that the individual engaged

¹¹⁰ *Interview with church member 1, Thursday July 9, 2020 at 9: 00am*

¹¹¹ Peter G. Northhouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th edition (Los Angeles: SAGE Publication, 2013), 5

towards the realization of the organizational dreams and aspirations. This makes Northhouse's four (4) ideological components on leadership vital to this study. Northhouse posits that "Leadership is a process, Leadership involves influence, and Leadership occurs in groups, Leadership involves common goals."¹¹⁹ Therefore, when a PWD is engaged as a church leader, adequate support and influence toward the achievement of the organizational goals irrespective of immobility is also a key in the dispensation where there are others who can act but with limited mobility posture.

In the focus group discussion, FG 1 debated that, PWDs are to be assigned leadership roles but needed to be partnered with the able bodied person to assist in other errands. There was emphasis on the need to assign PWDs roles that were considered *less demanding*. The group members were of the opinion that leadership roles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church were very demanding hence persons with serious disability types like the visually impaired and the paralytics must be excused in areas where the roles could be 'burdensome'. According to the group, the burdensome leadership engagements involve physical strength and frequent movements and thus, leadership pressure could frustrate PWDs. The researcher identified that group members were glued towards focusing on disabilities. Interestingly, there are varied evidences of person who are not disabled yet are not able to work under pressure which could also result in the visible frustrated dispositions. The researcher considered that most PWDs could possibly endure leadership pressure. Leadership attributes is therefore not limited to able bodiedness or disabilities. Moreover, the researcher identified that in the Seventh-day Adventist church, the Manual promoted the sharing of leadership responsibilities. The manual stated:

The pastor should not assume all lines of responsibility, but should share these with the elders and other officers...The

pastoral work of the church should be shared by the pastor and the elders. In counsel with the pastor, the elders should visit members, minister to the sick, foster prayer ministries, arrange or lead out in anointing service and child dedication, encourage the disheartened, and assist in other pastoral responsibilities. There may be circumstances, however, when it would be advisable for an elder to act as chairperson.¹¹²

On the other hand, FG 3 members suggested that the involvement of PWDs in church leadership promotes the reduction of the psychological impression that reduces PWDs to ‘nothing.’ As most Ghanaian cultures attempted to view PWDs as ‘sick persons’ who do not matter in social discourses, the group was of the view that if the Seventh-day Adventist church involves PWD in leadership position, it would support in facilitating the inclusion of PWDs in other social setups since the PWDs would be motivated by their involvements in that minor social setup.

Discussing reasons why the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana Conference had none of their Pastor with any form of disability, FG 3 members shared the below as some of the possible reasons:

- (i) That most of the pastoral training institutions do not have enough facilities that could support the training of PWDs who could afterwards work as Pastors.
- (ii) That the Seventh-day Adventist institution does not have scholarships that could motivate PWDs to take up courses in their theological seminaries.
- (iii) That church members have not received enough education on the possibility for PWDs to serve as Pastor in a local church.

Responding to the effectively engagement of PWDs in services such as baptisms and visitation, PWD 2 asserted that PWDs in Pastoral Ministry could resort to delegation as the most appealing

¹¹² *Seventh-day Adventist church Manual (19th Edition)*, 74.

leadership tool to satisfy the completion of most leadership tasks. Furthermore, PWD 2 stressed that technological advancement was available to lessen the hassle and tussles PWDs when engaged as Church leaders and Pastor. PWD 2 stated that the availability of technological devices which are disability friendly were a means to effectively communicate to the social world that PWDs could lead as others equally. In an interview with PWD 2 on the available technological support to enhance effective leadership role play of PWDs, PWDs suggested that the Seventh-day Adventist church could provide PWDs working tools like mobile phone which could support PWDs to access social media platforms such as WhatsApp messaging, Facebook messaging and twitter. PWD 2 lamented that some Church leaders have the negative notion that most PWDs could not take advantage of technology and thus, PWDs were underrated as persons with less insight into available technological tools. Though PWD 2 who was identified with visual impairment demonstrated to the researcher how he was able to make phone calls without assistance.

In the Seventh-day Adventist set-up, the researcher identified that leadership was a shared responsibilities and not reserved for only one person. The church Manual supported the above claims when it stated that:

Under the pastor, or in the absence of the pastor, an elder is responsible for the services of the church and must either conduct them or arrange for someone to do so. Communion services must always be conducted by an ordained/commissioned pastor or local elder¹¹³

The researcher attempted to review the possibility of delegation as useful leadership modes which could assist PWDs to favourably take leadership roles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church regarding roles that physical appearance might not support PWDs to honour. It was

¹¹³ *Seventh-day Adventist church manual*, 74.

observed that members of the Seventh-day Adventist church had high expectations of Pastoral visitations. Thus, church members felt dejected when they were not frequently visited by their church leaders and Pastors. According to CO 3 Pioneer Ghana conference did not have Pastors who were living with any disability due to the fact that some of the Pastoral roles such as confidential discussions needed the Pastor and his client only. CO 3 therefore queried that in a situation where the Pastor to a church is a hearing impaired individually, the employment of an interpreter might produce some sort of interference or breach of confidentiality. CO 3 suggested that PWDs could be limited in some aspects of the Pastoral life. Similarly, CO 3 concluded that visitation is one of the key means that inspires members to give more to support the businesses of the church. According to CO 3, when Pastors visited members in their homes and work places to reason with them, members considered it a privilege and often it became the basis for a member to offer more in the support of the course of God. Therefore, lack of visitation might affect the religious bonds between the Pastor and the church members.

According to PWD 3, his local Seventh-day Adventist church offered PWDs space to serve in various church leadership capacities however, PWDs were not motivated through simple compliments and appreciations. PWD 3 suggested that PWDs were often considered inferior. Therefore, PWDs were least offered opportunity to participate in local church programmes, activities and leadership. PWD 3 stated that due to the depreciation accorded to the exceptional performance of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist church, PWDs were not encouraged to do more to aspire to leadership positions. PWD 3 lamented that in his visual impairment state, he was able to lead the choir in singing, yet there were others who struggled with him to take that position without considering his exceptional performance. PWD 3 asserted that “since PWDs are

‘Special people’, members must motivate us when we have executed our duties creditably”¹¹⁴ Interestingly, the usual performances that individuals are able to do in their everyday life become unusual in the state of disability. Goffman shares the plight of a blind man who declared that “His once most ordinary deeds-walking nonchalantly up the street, locating the peas on his table, lighting of cigarette-are no longer ordinary. He becomes an unusual person”¹¹⁵ These notwithstanding PWD 3 drew attention to positive reinforcement which could resurrect the potentials in PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

PWD 3 iterated that lack of motivation and other practices that are demeaning kill interest in PWDs wanting to stage for leadership roles in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and remarked that “such practices as lack of motivation do not encourage individual’s spiritual growth and leadership empowerment”¹¹⁶

Furthermore, the researcher resolved to gather information regarding the possible acceptance of applicants who may show signs of disability at Pioneer Ghana Conference. According to CO 1 and CO 2, Pioneer Ghana had not received any application from any trained Pastoral applicant who had signs of disabilities. They both asserted that any person who applies to the conference for appointment as a pastor may be given equal opportunity and when the individual certified the requirement as a Pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, available offer shall be given irrespective of the individual’s disability or able bodiedness.

Subsequently, concerns raised in FG6 alluded to the fact that, most PWDs could perform leadership duties per excellence and that the Seventh-day Adventist church must encourage the inclusion of PWDs in every stage of the church leadership ladder. The suggestion ended on the

¹¹⁴ Interview with PWD 3, Wednesday July 15, 2020 at 2:17pm

¹¹⁵ Erving Goffman, *Selection from Stigma in Disability Studies Reader*, 140.

¹¹⁶ Erving Goffman, *Selection from Stigma in Disability Studies Reader*, 140.

note that, PWDs should be paired with their able bodied counterparts to discourage the seemingly idleness on the part of PWDs at church. Unfortunately, a member in FG 6 narrated the ordeal of her father who was identified with visual impairment. According to the member, her blind father had received constant interjection during church discussion. This was seen as a means to sidelining PWDs in church activity involvements. Warren has argued that “Plants need the right climate to grow and so churches. The right climate for church growth is an atmosphere of acceptance and love. Growing churches love; loving churches grow. It seems obvious, but it is often overlooked: For your church to grow you must be nice to people when they show up.”¹¹⁷

4.2 AVAILABILITY OF DISABILITY SUPPORT LOGISTICS AND GADGETS IN LOCAL CHURCHES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

4.2.1 Reading Material on Braille

Inventions have contributed immensely to solving most of the global challenges. PWDs have not been left out. One of the inventions for the visually impaired is the Braille. The braille is a type of written language available for the visually impaired. Through the use of the braille, the visually impaired are able to read to gather pieces of information and contribute to global discourses with less support.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there are materials that are referred to as worship aids. They include Bibles, Sabbath School quarterlies, Church manuals, hymn books and Spirit of Prophecy materials. The researcher attempted to investigate the availability of the above named worship aids in the braille as a means of engaging the visually impaired who could read and

¹¹⁷ Rich Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* (Michigan: Oasis International Ltd,1995), 210.

write from the braille. To the dismay of the researcher, it was discovered through an interview with PWD 5 that the Pioneer Ghana Conference does not own a Braille machine to support the printing of materials in the braille. Subsequently, there was no available library stocked with materials on Braille at Pioneer Ghana Conference where educated visually impaired members could visit. PWD 5 disclosed that the only source of accessing braille material was from the Southern Ghana Union Conference, the headquarters of the church at the Southern part of Ghana based at Osu, Accra. Unfortunately, PWD 5 hinted that few Sabbath School lessons and Bible chapters with verses were produced from the Southern Ghana Union Conference but were on sales. Due to the scarcity of financial resources, PWD 5 mentioned that he was unable to purchase them hence, depended on what others read at church to make contributions to bible discussions. According to the Director of Possibility Ministries at the Southern Ghana Union Conference, the Possibility Centre at Southern Ghana Union Conference is challenged with printing material for the Braille compositions. That had necessitated reasons why the few materials on Braille were sold to members with visual impairments. The Director of Possibility ministries added that they were sourcing for sponsors both within and without the church who could assist financially to meet the demands for the braille materials. The Director opposed to the sales of the braille material to PWDs who could read from them but reiterated that, church members were rather appealed to in order to attract them to purchase for the material for those with visual impairments. However, the Director of Possibility Ministries confirmed the sales of the materials on braille. PWD 5 lamented that to be able to cope with studies at church, a visually impaired member needed to memorize hymns, bible texts and Sabbath School lessons to be able to contribute to discussions during Church services. According to PWD 5 visually

impaired members who could read from the braille were often idle at Church due to the lack of reading material.

On the other hand, PWD 1 indicated that PWDs who were not educated to read from the braille had proposed to the church administration to organise adult education sessions to help them practice reading the braille, but the church has not attempted to make that a reality. In a comment PWD 1 mentioned that “all a visually impaired in the Seventh-day Adventist church needed to do was to study like any other church member since the concentration of the church was always on the able bodied members”¹¹⁸ PWD 1 further narrated that, gadget that would aid PWDs to effectively integrate and participate in church activities and discourses were not available.

4.2.2 Availability of Disability Friendly Pews and Wheel Chairs

As part of the observation tour, the researcher visited ten (10) churches within Pioneer Ghana Conference to ascertain the availability of disability friendly pews, wheel chairs for emergency supports. Churches visited included: Kasoa central church, Mount of Blessing SDA Church, Ebenezer SDA Church, Swedru Central SDA Church, Woraba SDA Church, New life SDA Church, Kasoa, Bawjiase Central SDA Church, Breman Asikuma Central church, Winneba Central SDA Church and Apam Central SDA Church. Unfortunately, none of these churches had inventory of any available disability support gadgets such as wheel chair and walking clutches. These materials were considered among the vital disability support tools and gadgets needed urgently in all churches. They were more importantly considered at the standby support tools to assist PWDs at the church settings. CM 3 confirmed that some members occasionally invite PWDs to church during church occasions such as Thirteenth (13) Sabbath services,

¹¹⁸ Interview with PWD 1

Guest/visitors day, all night and other prayer festivals among other special services. However, most of these invitees usually have difficulties accessing the chapels due to one form of disability or another. CM 3 hinted that since churches lacked these support gadgets, deacons had to support by carrying such members from cars into the hall which often attracted attention thereby creating embarrassing scenes. According to PWD 4, the plastic chairs that were available at his local church did not support his deviated posture causing back pains anytime he sat on them. PWD 4 mentioned that several attempts to crave the indulgence of the church leadership to make provision for a disability friendly chair have proved futile. PWD 4 concluded with this remark, “If I’ll go to church to add to my woes, why not stay at home”¹¹⁹

4.2.3 Sign Language Interpreters

Sign Language is a communication skill adopted to interact with persons with hearing impairment. It was one of the initiatives adopted in order to reach out to persons with hearing impairments. There are various forms of sign languages depending on a person’s socio-cultural orientations. Nevertheless, it is an effective means through which those with hearing impairment could integrate and socialize in a given environment.

In an observation made through selected churches within Pioneer Ghana Conference, it was only at Winneba Central church that the researcher could identified a member who had been enrolled in a special education at the University of Education, Winneba who was even not being judiciously utilized by the church. The rest of the church jurisdiction recorded a few PWDs who were enrolled in sign language lessons at Agona Swedru but collapsed for lack of financial support.

¹¹⁹ Interview with PWD 4, Wednesday August 12, 2020 at 4:10pm.

According to CM 2, there was one hearing impaired member at his local church who had to stop attending the Church for the lack of understanding of the weekly Sabbath Church discourses. CM 2 lamented that the lady had left the church due to communication barrier. CM 2 complained that the local Church leaders disregarded the call to hire sign language interpreter to assist in interpretation of Church discussions to her. CM 2 confirmed that church leaders were prompted to hire a sign language interpreter who could assist the member who was hearing impaired. However, the local church leaders did not put in effort to engage any sign language interpreter passing a derogatory comment that “the church did not have the resource to fund the hiring of a sign language interpreter for only one person”¹²⁰ Indeed, it suggested that, most church leaders lacked the understanding of disability matters and so, could not prioritize the needs of PWDs. The researcher attempted to connect the attitude of church leaders with the philosophy behind the establishment of the Possibility Ministries. Interestingly, three (3) ideological principles were identified which were the driving motivation for the establishment of the Possibility Department in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These were (a) Adequate preparation to assist identified PWDs in all local churches (b) acceptance of PWDs in all church social life for adequate integration and (c) the engagement of PWDs all religio-social activities to win them to God. The attitude of some church leaders was considered as deliberate attempt to show PWDs the exit from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The failure of CM 2’s local church to handle the new member with hearing impairment signaled that some church leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist church were either limited in reasoning with disability issues or showed disinterest in matter relating to disabilities. Kabue shared similar attitude of a Pastor in his write-up. Kabue hinted that, “I was reminded of a hearing impaired friend who approached a pastor

¹²⁰ Interview with church member 3, on August 12, 2020 at 7:48am.

after a church service and said: Pastor, I understood nothing of what you said.’ The Pastor retorted, ‘Do not worry, God knows that you are deaf’¹²¹ These attitudes were visible in the actions of some church leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Furthermore, CM 3 hinted that the Possibility Ministries Department of the Pioneer Ghana Conference initiated a sign language school to train selected members to be well versed in the sign language communications. CM 3 confirmed that disinterest on the part of some church leaders and the mockery of those who could attempt in signing aided in the collapse of the school. In an interview with CO 3, he narrated that the school lacked some basic logistics which needed to have been provided by the Pioneer Ghana Conference. For instance, the Conference was to give monthly allowance of One Hundred Ghana cedis (Ghc. 100.00) to the sign language instructor who was contracted to facilitate the process According to CO 3 when the allowance was not forth coming, the interpreter did not show up again and ever since, the school has collapsed since April, 2018.

CO 1 further stressed that local churches were encouraged to support the sign language school with Two Ghana Cedis (Ghc 2.00) every Sabbath when learners were to return to the school for continuity, but most local churches did not respond. In an enquiry to ascertain the reason why the Pioneer Ghana Conference could not meet the payment of the One Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHC 100.00), CO 1 could only respond with a sigh and softly remarked: “hmmmmmm, asem oooo”¹²²(Lit. Hmmmmmm it’s an issue oooo). CO 1 genuinely admitted that the Seventh-day Adventist church has not come into firm grips with disability integrative initiative. CO 1 admitted that “sometimes we feel they are ‘normal’ as any other person so we least consider their

¹²¹ Samuel Kabue, “Persons with Disabilities in the church and Society: Ahistorical and Sociological Perspective” in Disability, Society and Theology, ed. Samuel Kabue, Esther Mombe et al (Kenya: Zapf Chancery Publishers Africa Ltd, 2011), 15.

¹²² Interview with Church Officer 1, on Wednesday July 2, 2020 at 11:03 am.

needs.”¹²³ The researcher gathered from the various reactions that, the Seventh-day Adventist church was not on top of matters relating to full inclusive plans for PWDs. The preparedness of most local churches at Pioneer Ghana Conference was rated low through observations and the interview. Subsequently, CO 2 asserted that church leaders would consider as priority any adjustment to create an enabling environment to integrate PWDs into the worship system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This was clear evidence that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had inadequate plans for integrating PWDs into their worship system.

According to CO 3, greater space and time had been allotted towards evangelizing non-PWDs whereas consideration towards PWDs was low. CO 3 asserted that such attitudes had resulted in the neglect of PWDs thereby paying little attention to their plights. CO 3 suggested that the local churches of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana conference would fully satisfy their religious roles if PWDs were also targeted and integrated.

4.2.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO PWDs IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

During the interaction with some church members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the researcher observed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was listed among other religious groups in Ghana that frequently donated assorted food items and clothing to institutions that took care of the vulnerable in the society. Nevertheless, the Church was identified to be a host of a number of these vulnerable members in the society. The example of Jesus is valuable and must be needed to direct Christians to serve the vulnerable. Jesus’ demonstration of acts of kindness and compassions was believed to be the standards that Christianity of our day mimicked,

¹²³ Interview with church officer 1

therefore the Seventh-day Adventist Church could do disservice to Christianity if compassionate courses were ignored. In several Biblical instances, Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungered. This act of compassion for the vulnerable preceded the introduction of His hearer to the Spiritual nourishment. The Bible is full of these acts of compassion exemplified by Jesus, the founder of the Christian Religion. According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus had great compassion for the vulnerable and provided for their needs. At the Sea of Galilee, after Jesus had healed the vulnerable (the blind, the cripple and the lame), He demonstrated to them love and compassion by providing food to satisfy their physical needs. The people had followed Jesus for three (3) days and Jesus did realise their helplessness. Matthew recorded Jesus saying: "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. *I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way*" (Matthew 15:32). The import of '*I do not want to send them away hungry*' could possibly suggest that most of them could have ignored any gathering that were called by Jesus for lack of physical provisions. It would not be out of place to suggest that one of the cardinal pillars on which Christian foundations were built was through the act of *compassion* for the vulnerable in the society. Similarly, the book of Acts presented another fascinating experience that also suggested that physical provisions that comprised food and other vulnerable support materials play a significant role towards a fulfilled Christian Ministry. James declares that:

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith and don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother and a sister who has no food or clothing and you say, "good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"-but then you don't give that any food or clothing. What good does that do? (James 2:14-16 NLT)

In an interview with PWD 1, the researcher noted that blindness had rendered him unemployed. Reviewing the support that he received from the Seventh-day Adventist church, PWD 1 indicated that, life had become challenging to the extent that it was difficult to afford some basic needs of life. PWD 1 asserted that occasionally the church provided some monetary donations to him. However, PWD 1 expressed his displeasure by emphasizing that sometimes he had to prompt the church before provisions were made towards his survival. PWD 1 expressed his predicament in the Akan language saying: “*ɛto da a yaa na nea medi mpo aye den. Sɛ menya mmoa firi asɔre hɔ a etumi kyere ansa na ebi assan aba. Eto nea eye den paa dea, mesɛ wɔn ansa na wɔn akae me. Eto da a yaa na mɛfɛre nso menni hwee ye.*”¹²⁴ (Literally: Sometimes it becomes difficult to get food to eat. I occasionally receive support from the church. When it becomes challenging I call to request help from the church before they recognize my need. Sometimes I feel embarrassed but I have no option.) PWD 1 narrated to the researcher that in December 2019, he had to appeal to his district Pastor to solicit from the church some items that could support him since it was unbearable for him to stay without anything during those times.

According to PWD 1 the pastor’s response indicated reluctance. However, some ‘few’ items were presented to him. PWD 1 shared with the researcher that an unknown Christian group came to his aid when they presented numerous items mainly food stuffs. PWD 1 emphasized that He nearly switched to affiliate to that Christian group but for the reason of ‘Sabbath Observance’, he changed his mind.

The situation was different when PWD 2 was interviewed in relation to the provision of physical needs. PWD 2 submitted that he had enjoyed frequent and numerous supports from individuals

¹²⁴ Interview with PWD 1

from his local church aside the ‘occasional provision’ by his local church. PWD 2 mentioned to the researcher that the corporate church used to make monthly stipend of hundred Ghana Cedis (Ghc 100.00) but for reasons unknown to him, he had not received anything since May, 2020.

The researcher attempted to relate the suspension of the monthly stipend to PWD 2 to the Corona Virus out break when Churches were closed down. However, PWD 2 remarked ‘*hmmmmm ebia na saa*’ (lit. hmmmmm! May be) PWD 2 indicated that he would have wished if the church could enroll him in some trade or vocation that could ease him from his total dependence on the Church for survival.

Furthermore, PWD 3 revealed that, his local Seventh-day Adventist church attempts to support him whenever there was in serious medical condition. PWD 3 recounted a prompt intervention of his local Seventh-day Adventist church during his hospitalization at Trauma Hospital in Winneba.

The researcher attempted to engage church leaders at Pioneer Ghana conference to ascertain the availability of any Disability sustainable measures such as Disability Fund. It was discovered that, the Seventh-day Adventist church had no elaborate fund that was geared towards sustaining PWDs. The researcher identified that creation of Disability Fund could be one of the intelligent means the church could adopt to sustain PWDs. The Disability Fund could support in the enrollment of PWDs in petty trading and other vocations that could help PWDs to be financially independent. Churches could learn from the example of governmental and other social institutions and agencies to alleviate the burdens of PWDs. For instance, on Wednesday July 25, 2018, One hundred and sixty PWDs around Teshie and Nungua areas were privileged to receive some donations as a way of enhancing their livelihood. These donations were made from the

disability fund. According to Mrs. Evelyn Naa Adjeley Twum Gyamrah, the Municipal Chief Executive for Ledzokuku, due to the introduction of the Disability Fund, “many of the PWDs had stopped begging for alms on the streets, as they had been resourced to generate their own income to support themselves and their families.”¹²⁵ This initiative could better build the financial capacities of PWDs that could ensure that they have also built integrity.

However, in the focus group engagements, FG 4 members were of the view that churches had attempted to offer PWDs some financial and material support to sustain them. They believed that it was a means of offering kindness to alleviate hardship and to extend Christian love to PWDs. Members were of the opinion that it was quite unfortunate that some PWDs were usually not appreciative of the effort of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana Conference. Regarding the financial support to PWDs, CM 1 emphasized that her local Seventh-day Adventist church was as at the time sponsoring a visually impaired who had been deserted by his family. Among the packages that the PWD was benefitting from the Seventh-day Adventist church were payment of the rent for the PWD, sponsoring of PWD’s Twelve-year old son in Junior High School and monthly stipend of Two hundred Ghana cedis (Ghc 200.00).

Similarly, CM 2 was concerned with the rate at which most local churches were being met with pressure from PWDs in demanding financial support. CM 2 suggested that local churches attempted to be compassionate enough to provide fund for PWDs who were identified in the church. CM 2 was of the opinion that there were some of the PWDs whose states were not too serious to restrict them from working, yet such individuals have added to the list of PWDs that the church is providing support. CM 2 pointed to the fact that there were occasions that the financial supports given to PWDs were not huge, however the pressure that often came to their

¹²⁵ Daily Graphic, *106 Receive support from disability fund*: Wednesday July 25, 2018 issue20742, 60

local church was not sustainable. CM 2 was bitter asserting that there was a PWD in their local church where some of her family members were well-to-do yet they shirked their responsibilities and the church had to take care of her.

In the focus group discussion, FG 1 members were of the view that most PWDs usually expressed discontentment when the Church attempted to play such compassionate roles. One of them remarked, “*ετὼ da a wɔn a wɔn nipadua akwaa no bi anya ɔhaw no nso ho ye ahi esiane sɛ biribiara a wobeye ama wɔn no ensɔ wɔn ani*”¹²⁶ (Lit: Sometimes some of these PWDs were ungrateful and were not satisfied with whatever the church could do to support them.). Among the group was a participant who was in a wheelchair due to paralysis. He remarked “ahhh ! ετὼ da a moka asem ma εye ya papa” (Lit, ahhh sometimes you speak to grief the heart) The expression indicates that the above member of the group was not comfortable with the remarks about PWDs.

4.2.5 Sensitization Programmes on Disabilities: Seminars and Workshops on Social

Adjustments of PWDs

Dealing with disability issues is a sensitive venture that needs greater cautiousness and tactfulness. This is from the background note that, social stigma associated with disability usually places PWDs at disadvantageous positions. Sadly, some PWDs attempt to defend their state when confronted with opposition. This could be counted among the available reasons that influence PWDs inability to socialize effectively.

Studies in disability have therefore rejuvenated the interest of many and thus, not limited to only academic disciplines to foster effective guides to treat disability issues. As a result, Garland –

¹²⁶ FGD 1, on 7th March, 2020.

Thomson remarked that, “over the last several years disability studies have moved out of the applied fields of medicine, social work, and rehabilitation to become vibrant new field of enquiry with critical genre of identity studies...” To this end, individual, corporate bodies, churches and the like must have to adopt varied applicable strategies to equip members with in-depth information on disability issues. This could be among the many available channels that could assist in reducing stigmas associated with disabilities. By way of reviews, the researcher subjected some members of the Seventh-day Adventist church to interviews to familiarize them with the available sensitization programmes through workshops, seminars and campaigns geared towards enhancing effective communication by church members about matters relating to disability integration.

In reference to CM 1, the Pioneer Ghana Conference rarely organised education campaigns, programmes and workshops which could feed church members with the right information on current disability challenges and opportunities. As a result, most of the churches at Pioneer Ghana Conference were not well informed of measures to be adopted to care for PWDs in the local churches. In lieu of that most of the members lacked the appropriate skills which could enhance effective handling and coordination of PWDs for easy integration.

In addition, CO 1 alluded to the fact that the local churches within Pioneer Ghana Conference lacked educational materials and logistics that could assist the local churches to introduce church members to adequate stuffs of the new trends on disability studies and education. One key point raised by CO 1 which was considered worrying related to the poor attitude of local church leaders towards embracing initiatives that could support disability sensitization courses. In a related discussion, CO 1 indicated that the church does not have enough auto-tutorial material of disabilities such as leaflets or brochures. CO 1 prompted that “efforts were to be put in place to

ensure that church members received training to equip them to gain the requisite knowledge in disability issues which would enhance effective collaboration to fully integrate PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Later, CO 1 claimed that the responses from the local churches need much to be desired. Thus, Pioneer Ghana conference leadership complained of the unwillingness of local church leaders to invest in persons to be trained in disability support programs such as the sign language classes. According to the director of Possibility Ministries at Pioneer Ghana Conference, church leaders show little interest when initiatives were discovered to help prepare towards the inclusion and sustenance of PWDs. Moreover, the few promising initiatives which the church adopted on disability matters had failed due to lack of close monitoring by local church leaders.

4.2.6 Engagement of PWDS in Church Programmes and Activities: The Case of Structural Obstacles

According to Kabue:

The situation up to now is that pastors and evangelists do not see the PWDs because they do not go to the churches and congregational meetings. The reason why they do not go to those places is either because they cannot get in or cannot participate if they get there.¹²⁷

With this background information, the researcher focused on searching information on the inclusion of PWDs in church programmes and activities in line with the availability of disability friendly church structural environment. Kwarteng emphasized that “church buildings make it possible for people to get together for various church activities.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Samuel Kabue, “Persons with Disabilities in the church and Society: Ahistorical and Sociological Perspective,” 15

¹²⁸ Ruth Kwarteng, “The contribution of Indigenous Women to Organic Growth of Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Ghana” (M Phil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2015), 82.

According to PWD 3, he had rarely accessed the church's rostrum. The concern was on the structural designs that were challenging. PWD 3 commented that the last time he had access to the rostrum, he could not use his white cane to locate the pulpit and thus, the deacons had to hold his hands to climb that 'unfriendly staircase'. PWD 3 concluded that it was an embarrassing sight and since declined any offer to preach in his local church. However, PWD 3 was of the view that PWDs have a lot to share with the church but what he referred to as 'public disgrace' was a stumbling block.

In most of the churches visited within the Pioneer Ghana Conference, the researcher observed that structural designs of chapels were not disability friendly. Whereas some did not have disability friendly pathways, other had 'tall rostrums' which were difficult to access. At Kasoa Central church, the researcher counted Ten (10) strips of stair cases to the top of the rostrum. According to CM 3, ever since he joined the church he had he identified PWDs climbing the staircase with ease to perform or lead out in any church programme. Interestingly, the researcher attempted to familiarize himself with the challenges in climbing the stairs to the rostrum and indeed, it was hectic. However, the researcher identified a disability friendly pathway that was constructed at the back entry point to the chapel at Kasoa Central church premises but the researcher realized that it was poorly constructed since it was too steep to be accessed by PWDs. Focusing on the accessibility to the toilet facilities, it was identified that PWDs could not visit there without aid since the structure was unfriendly.

At Woraba Seventh-day Adventist Church premises, the researcher identified another elongated rostrum with no disability access. PWD 2 was of the opinion that church structures did not encourage the participation of PWDs in church programs and activities. PWD 2 stressed that

despite a constant suggestion to create access for PWD, church leaders had lamented on inadequate funds to support the construction of disability pathways.

Observation at the Bawjiase Central church premises revealed that, all the entrances to the chapel had no single disability access. According to CM 3, the church was planning to insert disability friendly pathways in the chapel structure to meet the demands of PWD who encountered challenges accessing the chapel.

At Awutu Breku, the researcher identified a disability friendly pathway through the main entrance into the chapel. However, the pulpit lacked disability friendly walk way. Similarly, the situation was not different at Winneba Central church premises. Though the entrance to the main chapel hall was well designed with a disability friendly pathway, yet the rostrum could pose a big challenge to some PWDs.

At New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kasoa, the researcher identified that the church had initiated the construction of a Disability-friendly pathway but had abandoned it since 2018. In an interview with the district Pastor, He asserted that the project was abandoned owing to inadequate monitoring.

Furthermore, the researcher identified that the Ebenezer Seventh-day Adventist Church had not considered plans to insert disability friendly Pathways into their chapel. In an interview with the Head elder of the church, he testified that the church would make provision in the main chapel complex which was under construction at the time the researcher visited the premises. The elder was of the view that their current place of worship was temporal. However, when the researcher visited the church on September 12, 2020 at 9:00am, there were a few members who were challenged with the access to the chapel. This confirmed the inadequacy of preparation made for PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

Admittedly, the researcher noted that the structural designs of most of the churches at Pioneer Ghana Conference posed major challenge for some PWDs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This research focused on integration of PWDs into the Seventh-day Adventist Church System at Pioneer Ghana Conference. The negative social classification of PWDs has been the foundation of the stigma and social exclusion of PWDs in the various stages of social life including church environments. Therefore, the integration of PWDs into social institutions has been among the challenging Phenomenon the world over. Despite the numerous social interventions that have been adopted through governmental and non-governmental initiatives on the support and inclusion of PWDs into all facets of social life, the challenges of PWDs in terms of social acceptance persist and the Seventh-day Adventist church setting is not an exception. Goffman suggest that “The central feature of the stigmatized individual’s situation in life can be stated. It is a question of what is often, if vaguely, called ‘acceptance’.”¹²⁹ The battle being waged by PWDs to be socially accepted and integrated into communal life is an ongoing debate regardless of the numerous constitutional and legal provisions that have attempted to define the place of PWDs in cultural, political and religious circles. Though public announcements and varied panel discussions have played pivotal roles in communicating the ideals of disabilities, social segregation and stigmatization have not been completely eradicated and that has been a major headache for advocacy groups. The conception that PWDs are incapable of contributing to the achievement of social goals has kept PWDs highly neglected and disregarded.

¹²⁹ Erving Goffman, Selection from Stigma in Disability Studies Reader,137

In an enhanced line of interest in disability matters, the Christian faith of today has not achieved much. In the Christian circles where the burdens of PWDs presumably rest, PWDs seem to face a greater challenge since emphasis is not laid on the numerous capacities that PWDs could assume to compliment the effort of the able bodied counterparts in all social engagements. Hence, PWDs are not embodied in plans and actions that geared towards the achievement of societal goals. Undoubtedly, socio-cultural views on disability and its associated stigma have influenced to some extent the Christian mindset. This has contributed to the alienation of PWDs from almost every social engagement, even those that take place at church halls.

5.1 SUMMARY.

It has been established in this study that PWDs are among the vulnerable groups in societies. It is not arguable that the socio-cultural perceptions of PWDs have contributed immensely towards their stigmatization. In this study, it was discovered that PWDs were considered ‘sick people’ who have virtually nothing to contribute to social discourses in most African settings. This idea was motivated by the notion that bodily deviations render PWDs incapable. Sadly, the so-called incapability of PWDs have influence the tag of PWDs as ‘abnormal’ beings. This was seen to be among varied reasons why PWDs were not considered for key leadership positions in societies.

Even though the Seventh-day Adventist has registered her concerns for the wellbeing of PWDs through varied church policies to partner the existing legislative enactments in Ghana, implementation challenges were identified in the church. Moreover, biblical considerations imprinted that man was made in the image and likeness of God. Man in the ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ reflected the completeness and the perfection of God’s art work as the Creator. The original man showed no sign of disability.

However, the origin of Sin was seen to have impacted the nature of man negatively. It was therefore considered in this study that Sin has contributed to the deterioration of man's nature and as such, accounted for all forms of bodily deviations and sufferings including disabilities. This notwithstanding, the dignity of humanity was paramount. The study linked the encounter between Jesus, His Disciples and the boy born blind recorded in John 9:1-3. The opinions of the disciples suggested that disability was inflicted on persons because of Sins committed either by the individual or the parents. However, Jesus seized the opportunity to address His audience by asserting that, one's disability must not be attributed to any Sin either committed by the person or parents. In other words, Jesus admonished His followers to desist from the practice of attributing disabilities to individuals' Sins since disabilities were not orchestrated by Committed Sins.

Similarly, the study highlighted on the African perception of personhood. It was discovered that the African accepted man as a handiwork of God. In a well fashioned philosophical analysis, man was termed to have both 'material' and 'immaterial' components whereby the material component pointed to the physical appearances and the immaterial, the spiritual connection with the divine. Furthermore, the study revealed that personhood embraced what was referred to as 'external' and 'internal' components of humanity. Thus, a person was seen to be a component of physical and spiritual entities and they influenced the social adjustments of individuals. The 'external' components factored sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. The embodiments of the internal outlooks were limited to reasoning and imagination.

However, the study noted that PWDs have suffered denial to certain key socio-cultural leadership positions. In reference, some socio-cultural positions like chieftaincy and clan heads did not include PWDs. It was conclusive enough in the research that the intelligence, social

status and affluence did not offer opportunity for a PWD to take any leadership position in the African societies since disability was detestable to African leadership.

Again, the research captured some derogatory identification associated with disabilities. It was discovered that PWDs were often referred in their social settings with the type of disabilities they were suffering from. It was noted that, these social practices such as derogatory name calling promoted the coiling of some PWDs from social environments. For instance, ‘*Adwoa Mumu* (Adwoa Dump) or’ *Kofi Apakye* (kofi Paralytic) were some of the derogatory names that the research gathered. The research identified that these names were forcibly ascribed to PWDs though PWDs did not accept them. It was noted in the study that these derogatory names often overshadow the real names of PWDs which did not auger well for the social respect and acceptance of PWDs.

In other related discoveries, the research identified that since the rights of all persons are to be accorded the necessary dignity, the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana outlined the Rights and Privileges of PWDs. Among them were the employment and the creation of disability friendly working environment for PWDs. Due to the vulnerability of PWDs, the Constitution of Ghana among others elsewhere focused on devising Laws and enactments to facilitate the recognition of PWDs in all stages of social life. The Constitution of Ghana spelt out measures that have been adopted through National legislation to deal with the stigmatization and exclusion of PWDs in the Ghanaian social environment.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the research noted that the Theological and fundamental Beliefs of the church did not isolate PWDs in all facets of the church life. The Biblical principles adopted by the church informed the transmission of the gospel to all irrespective of one’s social,

cultural and geographical position. In that regard, PWDs were among the targeted groups to be evangelized. More so, the research noted that there was no fiat in the Policies of the church in the Church Manual that restricted PWDs from being engaged in leadership positions. Thus, it was obvious that among the religious roles of the church, the initiative to promote the welfare and inclusion of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership positions was a responsibility. However, it was noted in the research that members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reluctantly nominate and vote PWDs into leadership positions. One important aspect of leadership position which was completely absent was the engagement of PWDs in Pastoral Ministry.

Subsequently, the research identified that, both the local Churches and office of the Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church lacked disability support gadgets and material such as Braille Machine and lessons in Braille, hence PWD who were visually impaired needed to memorize Bible passages, Sabbath School lessons and other Bible lessons at church to be able to contribute and participate in Church lessons and discussion. Consequently, deaf and dumb members in the church lacked communication tools and personnel for sign language interpretation.

Again, it was observed that the structural designs of most of the churches at Pioneer Ghana conference were not disability friendly. Thus, most of the churches did not have disability friendly walk ways with other having high rostrums which were difficult to be accessed by PWDs.

Furthermore, it was noted that the Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church lacked a centralized financial pool into which solicitation could be done to support PWDs. Though most of the PWDs indicated that occasionally local churches and other

individual church members offered support, these supports were given without adequate regulations. More so, the research identified that since there was no structured Fund to manage meet the needs of PWDs, PWDs did not have the appropriate channels to express their needs.

In terms of workshops, seminars and other educational procedures to sensitize members on disability issues, the Pioneer Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not do much hence the research identified that most of the members were not on top of disability issues.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research focused on identifying the inclusive challenges of PWDs and the pragmatic steps that the Pioneer Ghana Conference has instituted to promote the inclusion of PWDs in Seventh-day Adventist worship system. The research has proven that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had enough theoretical plans geared towards integrating PWDs in the worship system. However, the researcher identified that the supervisions that were available to ensure practical application of the church's policy initiatives were inadequate and at some quarters missing.

The research has enough practical evidences to state that PWDs are not adequately integrated into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The reasons are that:

- (i) PWDs are reluctantly accepted into Church leadership position.
- (ii) The research did not capture any PWD who was serving in the Pastoral Ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana Conference.
- (iii) Most of the churches were deficient regarding friendly structural environments.
- (iv) Disability support gadgets and material were not available to assist PWDs to be independent in Biblical studies.

- (v) The churches at Pioneer Ghana Conference lacked Sign Language interpreters readily available to support PWDs to communicate effectively.

Based on the above itemized discoveries in the research, the researcher concludes that PWDs are not adequately integrated into the Seventh-day Adventist Church system at Pioneer Ghana Conference.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research seeks to offer the following recommendations based on the findings that were discovered. The recommendations are grouped into two (2) aspects; (a) Pastoral purposes and (b) Academic purposes

(a) Pastoral Purposes:

The research discovered the reluctance of some members of the Seventh-day Adventist church in accepting PWDs into church leadership positions. The research recommends that the Seventh-day Adventist Church should initiate comprehensive educational programmes in the form of workshops and seminars or on readable brochures to enlighten members both on their biblical mandates for PWDs and the national policies on PWDs to afford a holistic approach to matters relating to Disabilities.

Secondly, the research observed that PWDs were rarely seen in the Seventh-day Adventist Pastoral folks. This could either be that, PWDs have not been fully emancipated and motivated to enroll in Seventh-day Adventist Seminaries or the study modules are not disability friendly. The research therefore recommends that the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminaries should have disability friendly study modules to prepare PWDs for Pastoral Ministry. This could motivate families who can support their physically challenged wards who have expressed interest

in Pastoral Ministry to enroll. Furthermore, local churches may identify PWDs who have passion for Pastoral Ministry to be offered sponsorship to enroll in Seventh-day Adventist Theological Studies in Adventist Seminaries. In addition, PWDs who are enrolled in Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminaries should be readily employed by the Conferences to inspire other PWDs who may have Pastoral Ministry ambitions to properly harness them.

Among the challenges that encouraged disintegration of PWDs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church system was unfriendly structural designs. Most of the Churches did not have appropriate disability friendly access. The research recommends that, Leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Pioneer Ghana Conference should insist and enforce the creation of disability friendly accesses in all churches. Again, Pioneer Ghana Conference leadership should supervise the inclusion of disability accesses in yet-to-be constructed chapels to facilitate easy movements of PWDs.

Finally, the study recommends the establishment of Disability Fund to support PWDs to access some basic Disability support materials such as braille readings, wheel chairs and also to offer financial support to train sign language interpreters to support PWDs in the local churches. The study anticipates that the Disability Fund could be a source to support PWDs to be engaged in gainful ventures that could offer them financial independence.

(b) Academic Purposes:

The research touched on an important area of the church life where numerous challenges were identified on the integration of PWDs. Further studies could be done on the challenges of physically challenged children and how they are incorporated in in the Sabbath School or Sunday school services available in Christian Churches in Ghana.

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APPENDIX A (INTERVIEW GUIDE)

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

INTERVIEW GUIDE (RESPONSES FROM PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES-PWDs)

This interview guide was prepared to engage PWDs purposefully to bring out their challenges of Religio-social integration that PWDs face in the Seventh-day Adventist church at Pioneer Ghana conference. This guide is to help the researcher collect data for objective analysis in pursuance of an M. Phil Degree. Please feel free to answer the question in the best way you can to support objective data collections procedures. Your responses shall be treated with confidentiality and respect.

AGE: 18yr-30yr () 31yr-45yr () 46yrs -55yrs () 56yrs and Above ()

1. How long have you been an Adventist?
2. What motivated you to join the Seventh-Day Adventist Church?
3. Were you born with this disability or acquired in a post-natal occurrence?
4. Do you experience any form of stigma as a result of your disability in your community?
5. How different is your reception in your local SDA Church from your local community and family relationship in terms of interaction as a disabled person?
6. Are you comfortable with how you are welcome every Sabbath at church? Do you sense any form of segregation between PWDs and their able-bodied counterparts?
7. Do people around your community express any derogatory remarks about your disability? Do you experience same in your local church?

8. Are you married? Did you marry from the church? How did the women in your church treat your proposal for marriage?
9. Do you frequently go to Church? Can you remember any comment about your disability that slows your potentiality as a member of your local church?
10. Do you find the church an enabling environment for disabled people? Are the toilet facilities, pulpits and urinals disability friendly?
11. Have you been nominated a church leader before? (If no why?)
12. How did the church estimate your leadership if you have occupied any leadership rank?
13. Apart from church leadership, are you allowed to play any frontline role in your local church?
14. Would you opt for Pastoring in the SDA Church should you have such opportunity?
15. Are you aware of any biblical or cultural enactments that bar PWD from leadership at church and your local community? Does the church acknowledge your contribution?
16. What are some of the reactions of the church members when you sit by them at church?
17. Do they sometimes make mockery of your disability? How do you respond to some of these occurrences? (if any)
18. Does your local church celebrate disability days and encourage PWDs to participate?
19. Do you receive any form of support from the church regularly? Does your local church see PWDs as burden on the church?
20. Do the members in your local church address you by your real name or you are referred by your disability?

21. What other challenges do you face as a PWD in your local church?
22. What role do you think you can play best when given the opportunity at church?

THANK YOU!
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS
INTERVIEW GUIDE (CHURCH LEADERS AT PIONEER GHANA
CONFERENCE)

This interview is being conducted to source information from church leaders (both Pastors and laity) in Pioneer Ghana Conference to collect data in a research on the integration of Persons with disabilities (PWDs) into the Seventh-day Adventist Church system. Your candid opinion would best afford a quality data collection for this research.

AGE: 18yr-30yr () 31yrs-45yrs () 46yrs -55yrs () 56yrs-65yrs ()

RANK: Church officer () Director () Laity ()

YEARS IN SERVICE: 10yrs-15yrs () 16yrs-25yrs () 26yrs and above ()

1. What is the total number of PWDs at Pioneer Ghana conference?
2. Do you have a sustainable disability programs on your church calendar of events that engage PWDs to fully participate in church activities?
3. Does the office have a department that sees to the monitoring of the celebration of disability days/weeks? Has the celebration been effective?
4. What measures have the Pioneer Ghana Conference initiated to sustain PWDs in the local churches?
5. Does the conference have standard church structural designs that are enforced by leadership to create enabling environment for the integration of PWDs at Pioneer Ghana Conference?
6. Are there inventories of disability support gadgets at Pioneer Ghana Conference that are used in supporting the production of literature for PWDs? (e.g. Braille Machine)

Can Pioneer Ghana Conference confirm any Pastoral staff(s) who is (are) PWDs? (if no, does the church have any Biblical or socio-cultural standards that hinder PWDs from serving in Pastoral roles?)

7. Are the facilities at the office of Pioneer Ghana Conference accessible to PWDs?
8. What challenges would you anticipate having PWDs as Pastors at Pioneer Ghana Conference?
9. Are there communications from the local churches that confirm that PWDs have increased the financial burdens of local churches and hence members show disinterest in their evangelization?
10. Does the Pioneer Ghana Conference have outlined plans for the retention of PWDs membership?
11. Does the Pioneer Ghana Conference run leadership trainings/conferences that involve PWDs?
12. What would you confirm as the future plans of Pioneer Ghana conference towards the full acceptance and integration of PWDs?

THANK YOU!

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS
INTERVIEW GUIDE (CHURCH MEMBERS)

This interview is being conducted to source information from church members to support a research being conducted on the integration of PWDs into the Seventh-day Adventist Church system. Your candid opinion would best afford a quality data collection for this research.

AGE: 18YRS-30YRS () 31YRS-45YRS () 46 YRS-55YRS () 56 YRS AND ABOVE ()

1. Are you aware of what disability means?
2. Can you state some type of disability that you are familiar with in your local church?
3. Are you aware of the causes of disabilities?
4. Do you think disability is infectious?
5. Do you experience PWDs in your local church in every worship setting?
6. Are you familiar with any challenge(s) of PWDs in your local church?
7. State any three of the challenges of PWDs in your local church.
8. Are washrooms, pulpits and church halls accessible to PWDs?
9. Do you often hear members replacing names of PWDs with their disability states in your local church?
10. Are there some known derogatory remarks that church members make about disabilities?
11. In your estimation do you think item (9) above has impact on the frequency with which PWDs visit church services and participate in church activities?
12. Does your local church elect members who are assigned a special role of assisting PWDs?
13. Are you aware of any PWD who hold any local church position
14. What are some of the worship aids that your local church has that support PWDs during worship services?
15. What can your local church do to encourage the participation of PWDs in your local church?
16. Do you have a Pastor in your conference who is a PWD?

17. Should the Pioneer Ghana conference post to your local church a Pastor who is a PWD, what will be your opinion?
18. Does your church encourage PWDs to enroll in Pastoral trainings?
19. Do you feel it is expensive to keep PWDs in your local church?
20. Are you still interested in the evangelization of PWDs into your local church in spite of your response in question 20 above? Why?
21. Are PWDs very difficult to handle in your local church?
22. What other three (3) challenges does your local church face that affect the integration of PWDs in your local church?

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B (PICTURE GALLERY OF SOME OF THE STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES
IN SOME IDENTIFIED CHURCHES AT PIONEER GHANA CONFERENCE)



Fig A (Shows a picture of the rostrum of the Kasoa Central SDA Church: Picture taken by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi, on Tuesday October 13, 2020 at 10:27am.)

Fig. B (This photo shows the rear view of the Kasoa Central SDA Church. PHOTO taken by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on Tuesday October 13, 2020 at 10:32am).





Fig C. (A section of the Rostrum at Kasoa Central Church premises: PHOTO taken by: David K. Ansong on October 13, 2020 at 10:40am)



Fig D (The photo above shows the front view of the Kasoa Central church hall. PHOTO by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on Tuesday October 13, 2020 at 10:43am)



Fig E(The front view of the Winneba Central Church Premises. PHOTO: By Ransford Osafo Gyasi on October 13, 2020 at 12:05pm.



Fig F. (The Photo above represents the side view of the Winneba Central SDA Church. PHOTO Taken on October 13, 2020 by Ransford Osafo Gyasi)



Fig G (This Photo shows the frontal view of the entrance into the office of the District Pastor of Winneba District. PHOTO by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on October 13, 2020 at 12:08pm).



Fig. H (This photo represents the left view of the rostrum at Winneba Central Church premises. PHOTO: BY Ransford Osafo Gyasi on October 13, 2020 at 12: 12pm).



Fig. I (This Photo shows the Right view of the rostrum at Winneba Central Church premises. PHOTO: BY Ransford Osafo Gyasi on October 13, 2020 at 12: 15pm).



Fig J (An uneven floor found inside the chapel of the Winneba Church premises.
PHOTO By: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13th October, 2020 at 12:20pm).



Fig. K (The photo above shows another access route into the Chapel of the
Winneba Central
Church premises through the back of the Pastor's office. PHOTO by Ransford Osafo
Gyasi on 13th October, 2020 at 12:42pm)



FIG L (A picture of some identified uneven surfaces at Winneba Central Church compound: PHOTO BY; Ransford Osafo Gyasi on October 13, 2020 at 12:45pm).



Fig M (This staircase represents one of the entry points into the Woraba SDA Church premises, Agona Swedru: A view from the Eastern corner of the Church premises. PHOTO By: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13-10-2020 at 2:02pm).



Fig N (A view of another staircase that leads into the Woraba Church Premises at Agona Swedru. PHOTO By Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13-10-2020 at 2:08pm)

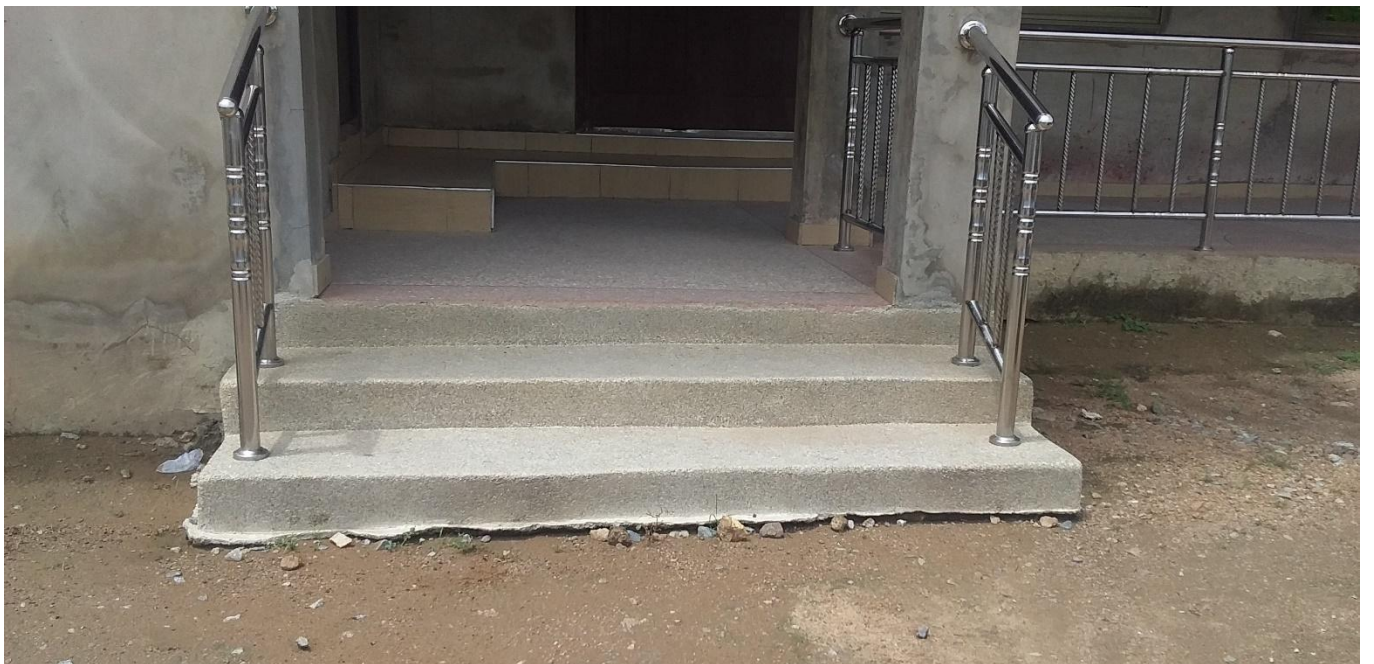


Fig O (This photo shows one of the entry points into the New Life SDA Church at Kasoa NorthEast District. PHOTO by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13th October, 2020 at 2:10pm).



Fig P (This Uncovered gutter was identified at the Western side of the Woraba Church SDA Church Premises at Agona Swedru. PHOTO by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13-10-2020 at 2:12pm).



Fig Q (The photo above shows the front view of the Swedru Central Church Premises. PHOTO By Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13th October, 2020 at 4:01pm).



Fig R (The picture in Fig R. shows another section of the Swedru Central SDA Church premises:



Fig S (This Photo shows the entrance into the Pastor's Office at Kasoa New Life SDA Church. PHOTO BY Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13th October, 2020 at 8:42am).



Fig T (A view of the New Life SDA Church rostrum being used by the researcher.
PHOTO Taken by David Ansong on 13-10-2020 at 8:43am



Fig U (The above photo shows another entry point into the New Life SDA Church at
Kasoa:
PHOTO taken by Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13-10-2020 at 8:43am)



Fig V (Figure V above shows the access rout into the washrooms of Woraba SDA Church. Photo taken by: Ransford Osafo Gyasi on 13-10-2020 at 2:15pm