23RD ANNUAL PCUSA – GHANA MISSION NETWORK CONFERENCE

9th – 12th October, 2024 – TEMA, GHANA

Theme: "PARTNERSHIP IN GOD'S MISSION" (Exo. 24:13, Philippians 1:3-6)

"Thanking God for Old and New Partners Doing God's Mission in the World"

Report by Kwaku Tieku-Dadey, Gethsemane Presbyterian Church, Senchi-Ferry.

Introduction

The 23rd Annual PCUSA - Ghana Mission Network (GMN) Conference was a profoundly enriching experience, offering a unique opportunity to reflect on our shared responsibility as Christians in advancing God's mission. As a young man and active member of my church, the conference inspired me to evaluate my role in my congregation and explore ways to foster stronger dedication and service for God's work.

The 2024 PCUSA-GMN Conference brought together representatives from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (EPCG), the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) with the mission statement: "To strengthen, expand, and celebrate mission collaboration between Ghana and the USA."

Notably, the conference highlighted the participation of many young people, with a focus on mentoring and nurturing them into Christian leadership. As a participant, I was privileged to engage in meaningful dialogue, worship, and cultural exchange, all aimed at deepening our collective mission.

This report captures my key takeaways, personal resolutions, and insights into how we can nurture effective collaborations.

Leadership and involving young people in the GMN

A recurring theme of the conference was the role of youth in advancing God's mission. Drawing from the story of Samuel's calling in 1 Samuel 3:1-10, the sessions highlighted the importance of equipping the next generation with opportunities to serve, learn, and lead.

Encouraging young people to actively participate in mission activities ensures the continuity and growth of God's work. It was inspiring to see efforts to mentor young leaders and foster their involvement in the Ghana Mission Network.

Cultural Exchange

The conference provided a platform for rich cultural exchange, celebrating the unique traditions of both Ghanaian and American congregations.

Some Ghanaian congregations shared the uniqueness of their worship and how traditions and customs affect the kind of drumming, dancing, and songs. Presentations highlighted how Christian practices have influenced modern Ghanaian culture, often replacing native customs. A keynote speaker emphasized the need to harmonize Christian faith with our cultural identity, rather than disregarding traditional practices such as names, attire, food, and music.

These discussions deepened our understanding of how culture and Christianity intersect, fostering mutual respect and learning among participants.

Cross-Cultural Worship

One of the most interesting aspects of the conference was experiencing cross-cultural worship. Reflecting Ghanaian worship, usually characterized by energetic singing, drumming, and dancing, stood in contrast to the more reserved style of many PCUSA congregations, which typically feature hymnals accompanied by piano and a quitter, reflective atmosphere.

This exchange sparked interest among some American congregations in incorporating elements of Ghanaian worship into their services to promote diversity. Additionally, the structured generational groups including Children Service (children's ministry), Junior Youth, Young People's Guild – YPG (matured adult), Young Adult Fellowship – YAF (typically age 30 and above), Men's Fellowship, and the Women's Fellowship within the PCG and EPCG were noted as an effective way to transition members across different life stages, providing valuable insights for PCUSA congregations.

Fostering Partnership between Ghana and USA Congregations

During the conference, it was noted that while it is relatively easy for partners from the USA to obtain travel visas to visit Ghana, Ghanaian partners often face significant challenges when applying for USA visas to attend GMN conferences. Although a permanent solution has not yet been identified, there is hope that these difficulties will be addressed to facilitate the participation of Ghanaian partners in GMN conferences held in the USA.

In the meantime, it was suggested that partners leverage technology to maintain collaboration and engagement. Online meetings can serve as an alternative for fostering partnerships until travel becomes more accessible. Additionally, while many USA congregations financially support their partner congregations in Ghana, it was encouraged that financial support should not be the center of the partnership but partners explore other avenues to strengthen their partnerships. These could include regular online engagements, such as quarterly or biannual meetings, as well as youth ministry collaborations to promote cultural exchange and cross-cultural worship experiences.

Personal Resolutions

Engaging my congregation:

It was such a wonderful experience for me to be part of the PCUSA-GMN 2024 conference. As someone who is keen on volunteering in technical systems or IT at my congregation, it was an advantage for me to engage with other young people in other congregations to sharpen my skills and knowledge of using digital tools.

I am committed to encouraging my congregation, especially the youth, to participate in church activities and volunteer their talents or skills to support the church's growth.

I have initiated a partnership between my congregation’s and the Greenwich Meridian Congregation’s youth ministries. This collaboration aims to promote shared activities, empowering and enlightening our members while strengthening our bond as one body in Christ.

Conclusion

The 23rd Annual PCUSA Ghana Mission Network Conference was a transformative experience that reinforced the importance of unity, cultural exchange, and active participation in God's mission. I return to my congregation inspired and determined to apply the lessons learned, fostering stronger partnerships and encouraging others to join in advancing God's work for His glory.

Grace and Peace,
Kwaku Tieku-Dadey
Gethsemane Presbyterian Church, Senchi-Ferry.

Snapshots from the Conference

For more 2024 GMN photos online, visit: [2024 GMN Photos]

Presenting with another member on behalf of my youth Bible discussion group. (standing on the left)

Group photograph with participants from PCUSA congregations.

Group photograph with fellow participants during a visit to Tema Ports and Harbor. (standing second from right).

Engaging in a keynote presentation with a question.