

THESIS TITLE
**PURSUING DISCIPLESHIP FOR CHURCH GROWTH: A PRACTICAL
THEOLOGICAL STUDY ABOUT THE RELATIONAL DYNAMICS OF
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IN THREE CIRCUITS OF THE ACCRA
DIOCESE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Relational discipleship is found to hold a great potential for church growth. The Methodist Church Ghana uses Small Groups, referred to in the Methodist tradition as the Bible Class as effective tool for relational discipleship for church growth. Bible Class has been used from the inception of the church for exponential growth of the church. However, the rate of growth in recent years have been below targets. This study explored the factors affecting the positive outcomes of the utilization of the Bible Class meetings as effective tool for relational discipleship and for church growth. This study explored the participants' knowledge and use of the structural arrangements put in place to help pastors and leaders to foster relational discipleship towards church growth (the numerical and spiritual growth and commitment of the church members); and the leadership and discipleship styles employed by the pastors and class leaders in pursuance of the goal of the church.

Five (5) Societies in the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana located in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, were involved in the study. Mixed Method Research that combined both qualitative (in-depth interviews and Focus Groups) and quantitative (structured questionnaires) research methodologies were used to explore the perspectives about the structural arrangements put in place to help pastors and leaders to foster relational discipleship, leadership/discipleship styles of the leaders; the benefit and usefulness of the Bible Class as a relational discipleship tool; their participation in church programmes and activities and the challenges they faced. The qualitative research consisted of 20 in-depth interviews and eight (8) focus groups with some church members, ministers and church leaders. The focus group discussions revealed that church members knew about the structural

arrangements put in place to assist leadership of the church to foster closer relationship with their members in pursuance of discipleship. The study also revealed there were many challenges associated with the participation in the Bible Class Meetings and other church programmes and activities. The Bible Class meeting was cited as having been put in place for discipleship making and could be used to strengthen relationship between the church leadership and members. The findings from the qualitative phase were tested at the quantitative stage.

The quantitative research method employed structured questionnaires administered to 650 church members, ministers and church leaders. The participants comprised 419 (64%) females and 231 (36%) males. Their ages ranged between 18 and 79 years with the majority (55%) between 18 and 40 years. The participants completed the questionnaires by themselves at the premises of their churches. The response rate was 100%. Three hypotheses were tested. The findings of the research suggest that the extent to which pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth influences church members' interest in church activities and commitment to the church. It was also noted that leadership's participation in church activities encourages members' participation in church activities and programmes.

Similarly, pastors and lay leaders who utilized the Bible Class or Small Group to build relationships with their members had greater numbers of members attending small group meetings and that pastors' involvement makes the church members perceive class meeting as beneficial.

However, only Interpersonal Leadership Style of Discipleship was positively associated with knowledge about church activities and participation in church activities and programmes. The more members know about Church activities, the greater their participation in those activities. There was no association between the other discipleship styles (e.g. serving, testimonial, intellectual) employed by leaders to foster relational discipleship. The discussions and conclusion of this study were based on these three studies (In-depth Interview, Focus Groups Discussions and the Structured Questionnaire Survey).

DECLARATION

Student number: **50282174**

I declare that *Pursuing Discipleship For Church Growth: A Practical Theological Study About The Relational Dynamics Of Pastoral Leadership In Three Circuits Of The Accra Diocese Of The Methodist Church Ghana* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references



31st December 2018

Eric Asante-Danquah)

SIGNATURE DATE

Table of Contents

THESIS TITLE.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Discipleship for Church Growth.....	3
1.3 Discipleship through Small Groups.....	4
1.4 Methodism Discipleship through Small Groups.....	4
1.5 Church Growth Movement.....	6
1.6 Small Groups for Discipleship and Church Growth.....	11
1.7 Methodist Church Ghana and Class System for Discipleship and Church Growth.....	12
1.8 Statement of the problem.....	18
1.9 Rationale for the Study.....	19
1.10 Research Questions.....	21
1.11 Research Aim and Objectives.....	22
1.11.1 Aim of Study.....	22
1.11.2 Objectives of the Study.....	22
1.12 Significance of the Study.....	23
1.13 Limitations of the Study.....	24
1.14 Conceptual Framework.....	25
1.15 Organization of the study.....	27
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	29
2.1 JOHN WESLEY’S METHODISM AND BIBLE CLASS SYSTEM.....	29
2.1.1 Wesley’s Small Group Organization.....	29
2.1.2 The Class.....	30
2.1.3 The Society.....	31

2.1.4	Leadership	34
2.1.5	Wesley’s Church Growth Strategy	36
2.1.6	Impact of Wesley’s Methodism	38
2.1.7	Decline of Methodist Societies and Classes in the West	40
2.2	THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA	44
2.2.1	History of Methodist Church Ghana	45
2.2.2	Structural Arrangement of the Methodist Church Ghana	47
2.2.3	The Methodist Church Ghana Membership	47
2.2.4	Bible Class Meeting of The Methodist Church Ghana	49
2.2.5	Class Membership	49
2.2.6	The Leadership of the Class Meeting	50
2.2.7	The Materials for the Class Meetings	52
2.2.8	The Benefits of the Class Meeting to Methodist Church Ghana	53
2.2.9	Overview of the Implementation of John Wesley’s Class System in Ghana	61
2.3	RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP	70
2.3.1	Relational Discipleships in Small Group Meeting	74
2.4	LEADERSHIP STYLES AND DISCIPLESHIP	77
2.5	PRACTICAL THEOLOGY ON DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH	87
CHAPTER THREE: FIELD SURVEY: VALIDATING THE ASSUMPTIONS		94
3.1	Research Design and Methodology	94
3.2	Study Population	94
3.3	Research Design	95
3.4	Phase 1: Qualitative Research	96
3.4.1	Selection of Participants for Qualitative Research	97
3.4.2	Data Collection Procedure	98
3.5	Phase II: Quantitative Study:	99
3.5.1	Selection of Participants	100
3.5.2	Sample Size Estimation	100
3.5.2	Exclusion Criteria	101
3.5.3	Data Collection Tools/Measures for Quantitative Studies	101
3.5.4	Quantitative Data Collection Procedure	102
3.5.5	Ethical consideration/ Statement of ethical clearance obtained or required	103

3.5.6 Data Protection	103
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSES OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.	105
4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation	105
4.3 The Steps of Qualitative Data Analysis (In-depth Interviews & Focus Groups)	105
4.4 Findings from the Qualitative Data Analysis	106
4.5.2 DESCRIPTIVE DATA	132
4.5.2.1 The Sample	132
4.5.2.2 The discipleship styles employed by the church and class leader	152
4.5.2.3 Pastors discipleship styles and interactions	152
4.5.2.4 Interactions with pastors	152
4.5.2.5 Members Perception of Pastors and Leaders Discipleship Styles	153
4.5.3 THE STATISTICAL TEST FINDINGS	155
4.5.3.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING	156
5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	159
5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	159
5.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	167
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	167
a) The Leadership involvement factor	168
b) Bible Class Meeting Content factor	168
c) Leadership example factor	169
REFERENCES	170
APPENDIX	190
Appendix A: Ministers and Leaders Questionnaire	190
Appendix B: Church Members Questionnaire	193
Appendix C: Consent Form	199
Appendix D: Approval From Church.....	200

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Participants from selected societies.....69

Table 2 Age group of participating church members.....70

Table 3 Ethnic groupings of participating church members71

Table 4 Descriptive data on the score of church activities.....72

Table 5 Knowledge & participation in activities/programmes.....73

Table 6 Significance of church programmes and activities.....74

Table 7 Class attendance 2016 75

Table 8 Motivation for class meeting attendance 75

Table 9 Benefits of class meeting 76

Table 10 Effect of the pastor’s participation in the class meeting78

Table 11 Opinion about class attendance 80

Table 12 Discipleship styles of pastors as seen by participants 81

Table 13 Descriptive statistics on discipleship styles 82

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1	Percentage of participants per societies	133
FIGURE 2	Disaggregation of participants	134
FIGURE 3	Sex Distribution	135
FIGURE 4	Age groups of participants	137
FIGURE 5	Church membership	139
FIGURE 6	Organization membership	140
FIGURE 7	No organizational membership	140
FIGURE 8	Awareness vrs. Participation in church programmes	141
FIGURE 9	Perceived importance of church programmes	144
FIGURE 10	Importance of midweek programmes	144
FIGURE 11	Bible class participation	146
FIGURE 12	Bible class attendance	146
FIGURE 13	Motivation for class attendance	148
FIGURE 14	Opinion about class attendance	152
FIGURE 15	Perceived leadership style employed for discipleship	154
FIGURE 16	Leadership styles as perceived by pastors and leaders	155

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

Jesus Christ before his ascension enjoined his followers to make disciples of all nations...and to teach the disciples to observe all that he had commanded them to do (Matthew 28:19-20). Since then Christian churches and organizations have employed various means to make disciples. Douglas and Tenney in the *NIV Compact Dictionary of the Bible* defines a disciple as a pupil of a teacher. Pentecost (1971:14) defines a disciple as a learner, a pupil, a scholar, one who comes to be taught, and that the idea of teaching and learning is preeminent in the word, 'disciple.' Wiersbe¹ regards a disciple from the Christian perspective as the one who believes on Jesus Christ and expresses this faith by being baptised to join the special family of the faithful. Such a person, when trained and equipped (Ephesians 4:12), is able to go out and win others and teach them. Therefore, a disciple can be defined as a person or learner who believes and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ and wants to be like Christ. Like Paul all Christians are to proclaim Christ, warn and teach everyone with all wisdom and to present everyone mature in Christ as well as be models for others to emulate (Colossians 1: 25-29).

Discipleship, therefore, is the process of making disciples. It is a process of Christian formation and mentoring, with the undergirding principle being an intimate relationship between the mentors and the mentored. Discipleship has been likened to apprenticeship. An apprentice is someone who undergoes training or someone learning a trade from a skilled person. Similarly, in discipleship, there is a disciple who is a learner and identifies with his

¹ W.W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 2007, p.86.

teacher, submits himself to a teacher and learns from him, not only by listening but also by doing. Ott and Wilson (2011:231) defined discipling or discipleship as “Helping Christ-followers to become established, grounded, stable and secure in him and in their practice of obedience to him.” Pentecost (1971:14) asserted that discipleship focuses more on a person’s spiritual growth and development as a sequel to his or her salvation such that he/she would be guided into an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. John Stott², on Christian discipleship, sees followers of Christ as pupils whose teacher is Jesus Christ. He sees disciples as those who have been called and are directed by God and have the desire to give their lives in service. Stott identifies Christian discipleship as having multi-faceted responsibility. First, is that God continues to speak through Scriptures hence the need for disciples to listen; every true disciple listens to God and does God’s will. Stott thus, posits that discipleship entails commitment to all that one knows about God.

The goal of discipleship is to be like Christ (Foli 1995). It is a life-long process where the person remains in the fellowship of the believers, grow in faith and commitment to Christ and His church as well as be a disciple maker. Wiersbe³ regards a disciple from the Christian perspective as the one who believes on Jesus Christ and expresses this faith by being baptised to join the special family of the faithful. The person remains in the fellowship of the believers so that he might be taught the truths of the faith (Acts 2: 41-47). Though discipleship is a continuing process of being transformed from inside out, it is nurtured in the community and produces fruit of the spirit (Wilkins, 1992: 40). The disciple is to yield to the Spirit’s leading

² J. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992, p.128.

³ W.W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 2007, p.86.

in service and mission, and to share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13). Such a person is able to go out and win others and teach them.

1.2 Discipleship for Church Growth

Effective discipleship is therefore needed to help members: new and old to be well established and grow first in the faith, and then for growth in membership of the church. Many researchers identify the influence of effective discipleship on the spiritual and membership growth of a church. An attempt to prepare persons to make disciples is what Wiersbe proposes as a systematic discipleship programme which may be an effective means by which a local church may be fruitful by multiplication⁴. Since the concept of discipleship is located biblically in Matthew 28:18-20 (...go and make disciples of all nations). Every Christian is therefore a disciple maker and a leader. Hull (2010:219) defined leadership as the conscious and intentional effort to foster closer relationships or connectedness with and among members of the Church with the intention of helping them grow in their knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ. Discipleship thus, results in Christian relationships and church growth. However, it is believed that it is only when persons have been brought into such relationship with Christ Jesus that they can be His effective disciples. Camp (2008:19) asserted that "Christianity without discipleship is Christianity without Christ." Servant (2010:2-7) notes that the general goal God has given every minister may be found in Matthew 28:18-20. He states that the command of Jesus to his followers to make disciples based on his authority is therefore binding on every disciple of Jesus (Christians) to make disciples

⁴ W.W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 2007, p.86.

1.3 Discipleship through Small Groups

A careful study of the Bible revealed that Jesus used small groups for his ministry on earth. The Biblical principle for Christian discipleship was created when Jesus called the twelve disciples and devoted a lot of time for them (Mark 3:14). Jesus began his public ministry with a small group (Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:13). He also met with small groups in homes (Matthew 26:6). As a small group leader, he had relationship with the members of the group. The early church also met in small groups - Acts 2:42, 46-47: *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”* (NIV)⁵.

1.4 Methodism Discipleship through Small Groups

The benefit of small group for discipleship and church growth cannot be over emphasised. Historically, the Methodist Church is known for its use of small groups such as the Bible band, class meeting and societies for discipleship. The class meeting has been an important basic structure for Christian spiritual formation in the Methodist societies (local congregations). The classes are organized within the local congregation for the purpose of nurturing converts to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. It is through class meetings that mutual accountability and support for witnessing and for following the teachings of Christ through acts of compassion, justice, worship and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are appropriated. It is through the class system that John Wesley and the early

⁵ New International Version

Methodists used to accomplish great success and exponential growth of membership. The Methodist Church Ghana has continued to use the class meeting as important discipleship forum which all members in the church are required to be part of. The class leaders are commissioned to provide lay pastoral leadership. The constitution of the Methodist Church Ghana states, “The weekly Class Meeting has from the beginning proved to be most effective means of maintaining among Methodists true fellowship in Christian experience. All members shall have their names entered into a Class Book, and shall be placed under the care of a Class Leader.”⁶ Like the early Wesleyans in the West, the Methodist Church Ghana complied with this class system and has achieved great successes for many decades.

However, currently, the class meeting as a tool is not being as effective and efficient as previously experienced. Christian churches have become aware of the fact that they have not effectively reached out to their communities as commanded by Christ in Matthew 28: 18-28. The growth of Christian churches has been slow and largely due to biological increase (children of existing members who come into the church) and/or transfer growth (members of one church who unite with another church). Growth by conversion (the coming into the church of new converts, receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour) has been low and in some cases non-existent. These observations have forced most Churches to re-evaluate their strategies in the light of the rapid changes occurring in the society. Elsewhere in the West, the Methodist class system has been replaced with different types of small groups with different ideologies and practices. The Church Growth Movement is an example of the new strategies for discipleship and church growth in particular. However, the gains of the Church Growth Movement cannot compare with the gains of an effectively run Methodist class meeting.

⁶ The Methodist Church Ghana. Constitution and Standing Orders. 2000 Revised Edition. No. 6 (3), p.17.

1.5 Church Growth Movement

The evangelicals in America found the Church Growth Movement to be a solution to the stagnation in the church⁷. The Church Growth Movement was initiated by Donald Anderson McGavran⁸ a missionary to India in the 1960s as a philosophy of foreign missions with the aim of growing churches based on research and social science analysis among others.⁹ He developed his mission principles based on the missiology of Waskom J. Pickett¹⁰ and Roland Allen¹¹. McGavran summarized the foundational concepts of church growth in the language of mission:

Church growth... delves into how persons and people become genuinely Christian and revolutionize and bless the cultures and populations in the midst of which God has placed them. Church growth arises in theology and biblical faithfulness. It draws heavily on the social sciences because it always occurs in societies. It continually seeks for instances in which God has granted growth and then asks what are the real factors he has blessed to such increase¹².

Peter Wagner¹³ popularized the movement in the United States through his work at Fuller Seminary in the 1970s and later in the 1980s the Church Growth Movement gained form and momentum and exploded onto the evangelical scene in the 1980s. The movement started with

⁷ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970: 262)

⁸ McGavran, Donald Anderson & Ralph D. Winter, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10, *Christianity Today*, (1986): 19–23; reprinted with comments and response in *Mission Frontiers* 8, no. 1 (1986): 5–10

⁹ *Stetzer, Ed.* 2012 October 1, LEADERSHIP What's the Deal with the Church Growth Movement? (part one)". *Christianity Today*.

¹⁰ Pickett, J. Waskom (1933). *Christian Mass Movement in India*. New York. The Abingdon Press

¹¹ Allen Roland (1927). *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*. New York: World Dominion Press, Cheung, Siu-woo

¹² Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), reprinted 3rd ed., revised and ed. by C. Peter Wagner, 1991, xiv.

¹³ Wagner, C. Peter, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1991), 7.

a passion for the Great Commission and saw people come to Christ, but its influence waned in the 1990s¹⁴. To redeem the movement, four (4) models have emerged with each of the four models making a lot of gains particularly, in numerical strength¹⁵.

1. The first model that emerged to revive the movement was the “*Attractive Church Model*” which was developed by Rick Warren in his book, “The Purpose-Driven Church”. This model emphasises church health rather than growth. It came up with programmes such as day-care, sports programmes, classes and contemporary music and worship to attract people from the community to the church.
2. Michael Slaughter¹⁶ of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church developed the second model in 2010 known as the “*Missional Church Model*” which was expounded as missional activities to which people are drawn to participate and they gradually become involved in the life of the church.
3. Brian L. Boley developed the “Preach God to Friends and Neighbours Model” in the book, “How to Share the Gospel: A Proven Approach for Ordinary People” (2012). In this model, members of the congregation begin to preach God to friends and neighbours. As they preach about God, they are eventually seen as “God-experts”, and people begin to inquire of them about spiritual issues.

¹⁴ 19 McIntosh noted that the Church Growth Movement was in a transition in “Thoughts On A Movement,” Journal of The American Society of Church Growth, Volume 8, Winter 1997, pages 11-52.

¹⁵ McIntosh, Gary (2004). Evaluating the church growth movement: 5 views. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/faculty-books>, 274

¹⁶ Michael Slaughter Change the World: The Recovering of The Message and Mission Of Jesus Christ, Discipleship Ministries www.umdiscipleship.org

4. The “Soul Winning Model” has always been proclaimed by Bible-believing Christians¹⁷, (see David Elijah Bradley (2012) *Missional Soul Winning: the study of a new horizon for Christian Ministry*) but heavily more recently with the announcement of a National Church Growth Conference held at Clays Mill Road Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. Host Pastor Jeff Fugate is a keynote speaker in Independent Baptist circles and is well known for his old-fashioned stand and his zeal for the bus ministry.

However, the two key attributes common among the different models are a passion for church planting and a willingness to apply social science methods to attract members. For more than two decades the movement has influenced Christendom both on the surface level of methods for outreach and church growth and on the deeper level of presuppositions of what the church is to be in our modern setting.

In the Western church¹⁸ the Church Growth movement became an enormous shaping force that most researchers unintentionally assume that the common church growth of Donald McGavran¹⁹ and Peter C. Wagner²⁰ principles were considered as the classics of church growth and are universally applied on the fields of practice and research. However, the views had shifted significantly and so there is only a slight recognition of church growth principles based on the Bible and personal conversion experiences²¹. Also, the popular practice of

¹⁷ David Elijah Bradley (2012) *Missional Soul Winning: the study of a new horizon for Christian Ministry*

¹⁸ McIntosh, Gary (2004). *Evaluating the church growth movement: 5 views*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
<https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/faculty-books/274>

¹⁹ E. Luther Copeland, *A New Meeting of the Religions: Interreligious Relationships and Theological Questioning* Waco, TX: Baylor University, 1999), 83.

²⁰ Peter C. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, CA: A Division of G/L Publication, 1976), 69.

²¹ [Church Growth Today](#), Centre for the Study of Growing Churches, archived from [the original](#) on 2019-11-13, retrieved 2007-10-03. <http://www.nationalchurchgrowth.com>

“church growth” is a divergence from McGavran’s emphases²². This allowed the Church Growth Movement to move away from its missional and biblical roots²³.

Newton (2007) also reported that none of the movement’s strategies adequately addresses the different dimensions of church growth and its dynamics; and that the movement is “only about numbers” and “success” oriented.²⁴ Stetzer (2012) states that too many of the churches following the emerging formulas became a socially engineered mission station, which drew people out of their own cultures, into Christian warehouses and away from their neighbourhoods and communities where they lived²⁵. The popular proponents of the Church Growth Movement provided an incomplete answer²⁶. Nonetheless, scholars and leaders from many denominations continue to meet annually to discuss the implications of these insights as the American Society for Church Growth.²⁷

It should be noted that the gains of various Church Growth Movements are not comparable to the gains of John Wesley and his early Methodists. Moreover, literature suggests the founders of the church growth movements were mostly Methodist (e.g. Donald McGavran, Michael Slaughter and Brian L. Boley, an atheist who became a pastor with the Calvary Mt Clare

²² Elmer Towns, “Effective Evangelism View: Church Growth effectively confronts and penetrates the culture,” in Gary McIntosh, gen. ed., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: Five Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), page 50.

²³ Donald Anderson McGavran, *Effective evangelism a theological mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988), 15-20

²⁴ Newton, Phil A. (May 2007). "The Package Matters: Problems with the Church Growth Movement". *Areopagus Journal*. Apologetics Resource Centre (Troublesome Movements in the 21st-Century Church).

²⁵ Stetzer, Ed (10/1/2012). 2012 Oct 1, *Leadership What's the Deal with the Church Growth Movement? (part one)*". *Christianity Today*

²⁶ Armstrong, John H. (May–June 1994). "[Problems related to seeker- sensitive worship](#)". *Reformation & Revival Journal*. [Carol Stream, IL](#): Reformation & Revival Ministries. 3 (3). Archived from [the original](#) on 2007-11-19. Retrieved 2007-10-03.

²⁷ "American Society for Church Growth" (*official website*).

United Methodist Church), who are probably attempting to recapture the fervour and gains of the early Methodists. The gains of the Church Growth Movement were short-lived and devoid of “Christ-like followers”. John Wesley’s Methodism span his lifetime and beyond and resulted in significant and incomparable qualitative and quantitative growth in disciples and disciple makers. As Snyder (1980:62) reported, the system of bands and classes continued for over a century with some facts as follows: The movement began in 1738, and by 1768 it had forty (40) Circuits²⁸ and 27,341 members. In 1778 the number of Circuits had increased to sixty (60) with 40,089 members; and ninety-nine (99) Circuits in 1788 with 66,375 members and 149 Circuits with 101, 712 members in 1798. Wesley wielded his to organize followers into societies, classes and bands that have had long-term impact and resulted in revival that called the British society to Christianity. The members lived out both personal change that led to societal transformation to the extent that Kast and Rosenzweig (1985) suggest the strategy serves as vantage points from which to understand organizations. Henderson (1998, 1) reported that “Dwight L. Moody, a non-Methodist nineteenth-century revivalist, commended that ‘The Methodist class-meetings are the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw.’ The Methodist Church Ghana has from its inception employed the John Wesley and the early Methodists original strategies and had great results. This study, therefore, is about the evaluation of the Methodist class system as applied currently to make disciples and for the growth of the church.

²⁸ A Circuit consists of a number of Societies under the pastoral care of one or more Ministers. A Society is a local organization that meets as congregation for public worship.

1.6 Small Groups for Discipleship and Church Growth

The class meeting in the Methodist tradition is still a key driver for discipleship and church growth. Since its inception the Methodist class meeting has been used as the means of discipling members who are won into the Methodist Church. The founder of Methodism, Rev. John Wesley in the 18th century, instituted the class meeting as the basic and main forum in the Methodist tradition for discipleship and spiritual development of members. It is mainly at class meetings that teaching and learning, pastoral care and mentoring of church members take place. The class meetings are led by class leaders who function as disciple makers who see to the spiritual growth of members and that members mature in their faith. As Hull (2010:45) states the class meeting which is small group provides the church with the best vehicle for people development; as it has all the attributes of small groups. Small groups provide intimacy, a variety of gifts without an overwhelming atmosphere and an ideal vehicle for reproduction (Hull, 2010). As asserted by Karen B. Tye (2008), small group by its nature, makes it possible for members to know each other better, and thus, strengthen the relationships among members of the group. Once the members become friends and associate well with each other, it deepens their desire to maintain their membership and as a result participate in the group's activities. Small groups also provide a congenial avenue for interactive teaching and learning to take place, and thereby help members to grow into maturity (Tye, 2008).

The class meeting is a key relational discipleship strategy that follows Jesus' pattern of ministry. Moore (2012:45) perceives discipleship as one, which not only portrays the nature and character of the Godhead, but also involves the active participation of the Trinity. He

states, “discipling includes a relational kind of faith – one involving the person of the Holy Spirit as well as the Father and the Son.” Jesus’s ministry was clearly characterized by the small group around Him and His relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Virgil Grant (2012) described relational discipleship as real people sharing real stories about real life with biblical truth and intentionality... and being transparent with one another, a journeying with people and allowing the Word of God to be the guiding force in the relationship. Clinton and Hawkins (2011:147) also conceived the concept as sharing real life and the Word of God with the disciple. Intentionality is a factor that underpins relational discipleship and involvement in small group life was a primary spiritual discipline in Jesus’ life (Earley & Gutierrez, 2010). Earley and Gutierrez indicated that Jesus utilised the small group for His ministry and so made it a recommended practice for developing and building up the believers for ministry. According to Hull (2010:219), effective discipling must take place in a small group setting.

1.7 Methodist Church Ghana and Class System for Discipleship and Church Growth

Aboagye-Mensah (2005) noted that like the Wesleyans, the early Ghanaian Methodists gathered a lot of hearers who met regularly to strengthen one another; to study the Bible together as often as they could; and to pray earnestly to God so as to endure to the end. This fellowship enabled the new converts to live their newfound faith. The Methodists found Societies and established Bibles classes. The classes met weekly to fellowship and offered pastoral care to all those who were determined to remain committed to Christ. The Methodist Church Ghana similarly established functional literacy classes where they taught the members how to read and study the Bible in their local languages and in English. Other small groups known as organizations were formed. Some of these organizations were the Women’s, Men’s

and Girls Fellowships, Christ Little Band, the Guild, Boys and Girls Brigade, and the Youth Fellowship. The organizations also met weekly, fellowshipped, studied the Bible and prayed. However, it was the membership of the class meetings and regular attendance to the class meetings that constituted membership of the church. Meaning, if your name is not in the current class book then you are not considered a member of the Methodist Church Ghana. The Methodist class system played a vital role in the development of the Methodist Church Ghana and the reason for its prolific growth in numbers and in faith and practices as Christians (Aboagye-Mensah, 2005; Edusa-Eyison, 1999; Essamuah, 2004 & 2010; Walton, 2015).

The Methodist class meeting, which had played a vital role in the development of the Church in Ghana and caused a prolific growth of the church is no longer considered as effective as before. Statistical reports²⁹ of the Methodist Church Ghana indicate that patronage of the class meetings has been dwindling steadily³⁰. Though the Bible class meetings have become permanent feature of the Methodist Church Ghana, the fervour that accompanied it has waned considerably so much that the relational discipleship that the class meetings offered the church members and the resultant commitment have also diminished considerably (Foli, 1995; Kpobi, 2008; Paintsil, 2008). The current statistics of the entire membership of the Methodist Church Ghana confirms that the growth rate is low³¹.

²⁹ The Methodist Church Ghana, 7th Biennial/45th Conference Agenda, Representative Session, Tema, August 2012. Conference is the governing body of the MCG constituted and meeting biennially

³⁰ The Methodist Church Ghana, 9th Biennial/47th Conference Agenda, Rep. Session, Tarkwa, August 2016.

³¹ The Methodist Church Ghana, 10th Biennial/48th Conference Agenda, Rep. Session, Sekondi, MCG Accra 2018.

At the conference held in the Sekondi in August 2004, the Methodist Church Ghana set a target to double her membership in five years³² (that was from 2004 to 2009). This means that by 2009 the church should have increased in two folds. This presupposes that the church should have recorded twenty percent (20%) yearly increase within five years. The church anticipated a high growth rate of membership, but the reports indicated that the rate of growth had been far lower than expected. The 4th Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana held at Akim Oda in August 2006 reviewed the numerical growth of the Church and found that in 2004 the total membership of the Church was six hundred and thirty-one thousand two hundred (631,200) whilst that of 2006 was six hundred and thirty-four thousand six hundred and eighty-nine (634,689). The number of persons added to the church was a mere three thousand four hundred and eighty-nine (3, 489). That was 0.6 percentage increase. The trend continued down the years. Obeng Adjei (2013) in his study of one Diocese (Effiduase Diocese), revealed that the numerical growth of that Diocese was below national growth rate of two-point five percent (2.5%). The Diocese's growth rate of one-point two percent (1.2%) was against the backdrop of the Church's own projection of twenty percent (20%) yearly growth rate from 2004 to 2009. What could possibly be the cause of the stunted growth? If John Wesley used the class meetings to register numerical growth as well as qualitative growth, and the Methodist Church Ghana also in its early years followed suit by using the class meetings for its exponential growth, then a search for the cause of the stunted growth in the church today must necessarily begin from the class meetings. The Synod Report from the Cape Coast Diocese in 2013 indicated that "members attending class meetings half the time was 53%". This means that as many as 47% of the membership were not attending class meeting.

³² The Methodist Church Ghana, *3rd Biennial Conference Agenda*, Rep. Session, Sekondi, Accra: MCG, 2004

The Accra Diocese³³ of Methodist Church Ghana, Synod³⁴ Representative Agenda reviewed the church's national rate of growth from 2006 to 2009 and noted that the church's membership had dropped to five hundred and ninety-four thousand and thirty-one (594,031) in 2009. According to the analysis report for 2006 and 2009, the rate of growth for 2006 was 2.7 percent but that of 2009 was 0.16 percent. The report also stated that in 2009 an average of seventeen thousand, six hundred and thirty-four (17,634) of church members in the Diocese did not attend church service on Sunday and ten thousand, six hundred and sixty-six (10,666) full members did not attend class meetings (Accra Diocese, 2013:220).

To stop the decline and to increase membership, newer strategies were implemented. The measures employed included revamping Bible class meetings by training and periodic retraining of Bible class leaders, institution of 'leaders-only' class meeting, strengthening social services and youth development programmes³⁵. This resulted in gradual increase in total membership of the church. The 7th Biennial Conference of the Methodist Church Ghana, held at Tema in 2012 revealed that the membership of the church increased to six hundred and thirty-two thousand, one hundred and two (632,102) in 2010 and six hundred and forty-nine thousand, one hundred and two (649,102) in 2011. An increase of two thousand five hundred and eighty-seven (2,587) and seventeen thousand (17,000 [2.6%]) respectively. There was a further increase to seven hundred and fifty-six thousand, nine hundred and eighty-eight (756,988) in 2015³⁶ and eight hundred and twenty-seven thousand, three hundred and fifty-

³³ Diocese of Methodist Church Ghana is composed of a number of Circuits in the same area, as determined by Conference from time to time.

³⁴ Synod is a meeting constituted in a Diocese which shall advise and assist the Conference and the Diocesan Bishop in the development of the work of God in and through the Circuits of the Diocese.

³⁵ The Methodist Church Ghana 10th Biennial / 47th Conference Agenda – Representative Session, Tema 2012.

³⁶ The Methodist Church Ghana 10th Biennial / 47th Conference Agenda – Representative Session, Tarkwa 2016

three (827,353 in 2017³⁷). The projection was 10percent increase in total membership strength each year (869,000. The percentage increase was not uniform across the nineteen (19) dioceses of the church. In 2017 the total church workers was 4,603. Out of the number 884 and 352 were pastors and accredited evangelists respectively.

Various reasons have been given to explain the dwindling numbers of members attending class meetings as against the total number of church membership. According to Hull (2007:220), “One reason Christians fear evangelism is a lack of know-how. The small group could be used as vehicle to train members to evangelize as small group trains its members to think in new ways as well as gives them new skills.” Others claim members lack that dedication and commitment because the Christian life is difficult and challenging, with a call upon Christians to deny themselves and to follow the examples of Christ (Kpobi, 2008; Paintsil, 2008). Some have blamed the class leaders for not being proactive in their roles as disciple makers and so are unable to nurture members into maturity and remain committed to the church. Such members are expected to witness and win other people into God’s Kingdom and then to make the effort to nurture them so that the church would grow qualitatively and quantitatively (Aboagye-Mensah 2005; Asamoah Gyedu 2011; Foli 1995).

Imasogie (1993:14) claim “the average African Christian’s commitment to Christ is superficial This means that their commitment is shallow and often crumbles under the pressure of any looming danger or threat. The superficiality of the African Christian’s commitment according to Imasogie is evidenced by the fact that when faced with problems and uncertainties they often revert to traditional religious practices.” The point to note in this

³⁷ The Methodist Church Ghana *10th Biennial / 48th Conference Agenda* – Representative Session, Sekondi 2018.

assertion is that the individual African Christian seems unstable and is often preoccupied with seeking for solution to physical problems that confront them; unmindful of where the solution is coming from portrays spiritual immaturity and can be traced (to some degree) to the lack of personal interest shown in the spiritual development of the individual by church leadership, rather than superficial spirituality as claimed by Imasogie.

Foli (1995) reported that the way the Bible Class meetings are held has been considered the major problem for the church in her quest of pursuing qualitative and quantitative church growth through discipleship strategies. The findings were confirmed by Paintsil (2008).

Obeng Adjei (2013) suggested that members' commitment to church activities has decreased and reported that the majority of the members who are tagged to be regular attendees were best habitual late comers. He however, found that the use of Weekly Bible Lessons for discipleship through the Bible class meeting at the Effiduase Diocese of Methodist Church Ghana has improved biblical understanding of the members and has resolved some social issues among the members.

It is necessary not to rule out lapses in leadership's own relational discipleship as one major factor. The writer of the book of Hebrews states, "Remember your leaders, who spoke God's message to you, reflect on the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7, NET). The Greek word translated as 'imitate' ("follow" in the KJV) is "*mimeomai*" from which the word, 'mimic' is derived and means to follow, imitate.³⁸ This implies, 'to copy,' or 'reproduce' someone's behaviour or looks. The writer admonishes his hearers to learn from the life experiences of their leaders and reproduce the practical expression of faith as

³⁸ James Strong (1986). Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. Greek/NT Session. No. 3401, p.64.

exhibited by those leaders. If the class meeting attendance and commitment to church activities by members are decreasing, then relational discipleship efforts between the leadership and members may not be as effective as they should. There is therefore the need to review the whole functionality of the class Meeting with the view to ascertaining its operational failures.

1.8 Statement of the problem

Although divine church services at the Society³⁹ levels attendance have been consistently high Bible Class Meeting attendance has declined significantly over the years. In the Accra diocese for the 2018, conference report indicated that in 2017, the average church service attendance at the Society level was seventy nine percent (79%), however attendance at Bible Class Meeting was thirty nine percent (39%). In 2015 the figures were eighty two percent and fifty one percent respectively for attendance at Church Service and Bible Class Meetings respectively. In 2014, the average church service attendance at the Society level was eighty three percent (83%); and attendance at Bible Class Meeting was forty nine percent (49%). This trend shows that majority of the church members are mere church goers who are not being discipled. Given the fact that the class meeting is the church's main forum for discipleship, any drop in attendance signifies that a substantial number of members are denying themselves the opportunity of receiving their spiritual nurture and for that matter not being equipped for service. This condition makes it impossible for the leaders to have access to their members for teaching, interaction, and spiritual development. This study therefore sought to establish the main causes of the decline in class meeting attendance and to identify possible solutions to the declining state of affairs.

³⁹ the Methodist Church is a local congregation

1.9 Rationale for the Study

The goal of finding permanent solution to the challenges associated with class meetings was the main motivation to undertake this study. The church from the onset used Bible classes and other small groups for discipleship and membership drive and had significant growth for decades. The Bible class and church organizations meeting that had served as the church's prescribed vehicle for church health and growth and offered pastors and church leadership sufficient opportunity to establish closer relationship with the members for the purpose of discipleship and pastoral care and growth in membership is no longer effective and therefore, unable to achieve the purposes for which they were instituted. Even though studies and other literature (for example, Drurey, 2017; Hardt, 2000; Henderson, 1997 & 2010; Warren, 1995) have continued to suggest that small groups are definitely the vehicle for disciple making and for church growth as they train members to think in new ways as well as give them new skills. Bible class as a small group tool for discipleship and church growth by Methodist Church Ghana has currently failed and still failing to meet the expected outcome.

Several reasons have been suggested and their corresponding new strategies established, but attendance at the class meetings has continued to be considerably low. Anecdotal report suggests the church leaders are not paying the needed attention to this lapse and or may not actually know and understand exactly the contributory factors. Crisp (2015) suggested that modern lifestyle and way of life may but be consistent with eighteenth century approach to discipleship. However, Hardt (2000), believes this is possible. A few Ghanaian Methodist pastors (e.g. Paintsil 2008; Obeng Adjei 2013) have attempted to unravel the causes but the

studies did not adequately address the issue. Obeng Adjei (2013) explored Jesus' command of making disciples recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and its relevance to the Methodist Church Ghana Bible class system in one. Paintsil (2008) found that the Weekly Bible Lessons (Study Material for Bible Class Meeting) impacted positively on the spiritual growth of the members of Methodist Church Ghana. Nsengimana (2014) in a research on using a small group approach to increase church growth in the Gikondo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, found that a small group ministry is probably the best tool for reaching the people. It is therefore baffling that the Methodist Church Ghana is struggling to reap the full benefits of such a powerful small group tool as the class meeting.

The studies indicated above suggested that the Bible illustrates the importance of organizing God's people into small groups. The studies though contributed to the understanding and benefit of using the Bible class for discipleship and church growth, they were simple descriptive rather than directly exploring the issues related to Bible class meeting. They did not adequately explore the various perspectives and dimensions of the challenges associated with the implementation of the class system in modern times. The evidence presented did not sufficiently explain the cause(s) of the poor growth in membership. The studies did not attempt to systematically explore the possible causes of the low Bible class attendance; a class system which had previously been the main driver for discipleship and church growth. The studies were descriptive and or explored the problem from evangelism perspective

To establish the causes of the problem and the mitigating factors, this study employed the mixed method research approach that combined qualitative (Focus Groups) and quantitative

(structured questionnaires) research methodologies to determine the multiple perspectives associated with the problem as well as tested the findings statistically.

1.10 Research Questions

The researcher attempted to address the following questions throughout the research:

1. Members' knowledge of the existence of the structural arrangements that are in place to support pastors and church leadership in their discipleship roles at the Society⁴⁰ level.
2. The use of Class meetings and other church activities to promote relational discipleship and for church growth.
3. The involvement of leadership in Class meetings and other church activities and its effects on members' participation and commitment.
4. What leadership discipleship styles are employed by the pastors and class leaders in their discipleship?
5. What percentage of the church members in the societies attends class meetings and their perception of church membership growth?
6. How relevant are the teaching materials at the class meetings to our contemporary Ghanaian situations?
7. Any other findings that are of interest and contribute to understanding of the challenges associated with the use of Bible Class meetings for discipleship and church growth.

⁴⁰ the Methodist Church is a local congregation

1.11 Research Aim and Objectives

1.11.1 Aim of Study

- 1 The main aim of the study was to explore the utilization of Bible class meetings by the pastors and church leadership to promote qualitative and quantitative church growth through relational discipleship. It was expected that this study would provide a clearer understanding of the challenges associated with the class (small group) meetings and give the pastors and church leadership a new perspective about how to foster relational discipleship for church growth.
- 2 The study was also to identify and examine the extent to which the class meeting has maintained its relevance as a disciple making and church growth tool in the Methodist Church Ghana as well as the extent to which the contemporary church has deviated from its Wesleyan class meeting antecedent and the areas in which such deviations are affecting the growth of the contemporary church.

1.11.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to determine members understanding of their roles and that of the leadership in making disciples and what relevance it has to the Methodist Class System in Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. The objectives are as follows:

1. To establish that the class meeting is the best tool for effective discipleship in the Methodist Church Ghana and that its neglect has dire consequences for the growth of the church.
2. To determine members' awareness of the class meeting as a discipleship making tool and how they perceive the class meeting as relevant to their spiritual growth.

3. To determine how this structural arrangement that is in place to support pastors and church leadership in their discipleship roles is being utilized to promote relationship with and among members.
4. To determine members perception about the selection and level of involvement of leaders in the class meetings and its effect on the class meetings and other church activities.
5. Statistical testing of the data from the quantitative research

1.12 Significance of the Study

Findings of the research will add to the knowledge and understanding of the factors associated with the use of small groups to disciple church members for church growth. This research provides information to the church about the challenges and the mitigating factors associated with the Bible class meetings in the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana and offers recommendations on how to improve attendance at class meetings. It is also expected to assist interested Christians and churches to appreciate the class system of the Methodist Church Ghana as well as how class meetings should be handled. Pastors and church leadership will know the most effective and reliable leadership styles for discipleship and church growth.

- a) It will allow for the identification of the concept and framework of relational discipleship that takes into account the role of the pastor and church leadership as a factor of church growth.
- b) It also supports and enriches theory and model of relational discipleship for church growth.

- c) Generates greater awareness among pastors and leadership of churches on the importance of pursuing relational discipleship using the class meeting as a vehicle for promoting church growth.
- d) It provides useful knowledge on factors that might impact positively and contribute to the successful adoption of relational discipleship.
- e) This study gives insight on improving the spiritual life of Christians and training of pastors and church leaders.
- f) Finally, it is expected to serve as a guide for future researchers on issues of discipleship and church growth especially through the class meeting as a small group.

1.13 Limitations of the Study

According to Banister (1994:157), we must bear in mind that completely valid research, which captures and represents an unchallengeable truthful view of reality, is not possible and this study is no exception. The following are notable limitations in this study:

1. **The geographical area** is mostly urban and required a lot of time to undertake the research, which was also a potential challenge. Notwithstanding the aforementioned challenges, the researcher made a careful provision to surmount all these speculated hitches and hurdles, to complete the research in the recorded time given.
2. **Time and Resources:** With unrestricted and abundance of time and resources available to the study, the researcher could have spent more time with the participants and even expanded the population size. This could afford the opportunity to capture the views of broader spectrum of church members.

3. **The questionnaire:** The questions used for the survey were closed-ended and with five-point Likert scale responses and this may have constituted a bias regarding the options available to the participants.

4. **Premises for data collection:** The study was conducted at the church premises after church service when many were in a hurry to go home. This probably affected the responses that the participants came up with.

5. **Cultural preferences:** The study is set within the Ghanaian and for that matter an African culture in which socialization is very strong. Therefore, the views of the participants in the study may have been influenced by such cultural inclination which may not necessarily represent the opinion of other cultural groupings in the country.

These limitations, notwithstanding, the survey still provides effective interpretive results. The qualitative research could help address this bias.

1.14 Conceptual Framework

Relational discipleship offered by the Methodist Bible class system and leadership discipling styles hold great potential for discipleship and church growth. The Methodist tradition of the Bible class meeting serves as the appropriate vehicle for effective relational discipleship and for membership drive. As indicated by the above statistics of the church, members are not attending the class meetings which could be attributed to the church's failure to effectively

utilize the class meeting for church growth. Consequently, most church members are unable to disciple others as reported by Asamoah-Gyadu (2011). When church leadership shows and adheres to the churches strategies for membership drive, shows interest in the members' spiritual growth then they can effectively utilize the class system for discipleship and consequently, the church members can grow into matured Christians and also become disciple makers. Again, leadership (pastors and church leaders) discipling styles employed in small groups can be associated with members' commitment and church growth. The selection, training and supervision of the leaders cannot also be overemphasised.

The conceptual framework of this study was based on John Wesley's class meeting as a model for disciple making and as applied by the Methodist Church Ghana. This study examined the historical development, the theological foundation, and the social outcomes of John Wesley's class meeting as it applies in Ghana for disciple making and church growth. The study also looked at the historical progress and achievements of the class system, participants knowledge about the structural arrangement of the system and their participation in the church's Bible class and other small groups. The study also explored the participants' perceptions about the relevance of the Methodist class system as practised by Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana to ascertain the mitigating factors that underpin their practice.

1.15 Organization of the study

This study report is organized under the following five chapters:

Chapter One: General Introduction of the study. Rationale for the study, the problem statement and aims and objectives of the study as well as significance of the study and the limitation of the research.

Chapter Two: Covers the relevant literature reviewed, the descriptions of the historical development of the Methodist class meeting and that of the structural arrangement of Methodist Church Ghana's Bible class meeting; the decline of the class system and its relevance for today's Methodists in Ghana. This section also reports on some of the research findings on the Bible class system.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology. The chapter explains the design, research approaches. This study employed the mixed method research approach that combined qualitative (Focus Groups) and quantitative (structured questionnaires) research methodologies to determine the multiple perspectives associated with the problem as well as tested the findings statistically.

Chapter Four: Presents the Analysis of data and presentation of the findings from the quantitative research. The results of the hypotheses tested on the structured interviews were reported at this section. The findings from the qualitative research were statistically tested. The study sought to test the following four (4) hypotheses:

1. There is relationship between knowledge and perceived benefit of the class meeting on one hand and participation/attendance on the other.

2. Pastors who utilize the Bible Class or Small Group to build relationships with their members will have greater numbers of members attending small group meetings.
3. The extent to which pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth will determine the level of church members' interest in activities and commitment to the church.
4. Leadership's discipleship style will be associated with the growth of members in terms of their number, spirituality and commitment.

Chapter Five: Provides the discussion of the findings, summary, conclusion and the implications for practice, recommendation for future research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 JOHN WESLEY'S METHODISM AND BIBLE CLASS SYSTEM

2.1.1 Wesley's Small Group Organization

John Wesley was an eighteenth-century Anglican priest and the primary leader of the Evangelical Awakening, which had a profound effect on the spiritual, social and political life of England and its colonies. As asserted by most small group advocates and researchers, small group's discipling predates John Wesley. The history of small groups goes back to Jesus and the disciples.⁴¹ However, it was John Wesley, who through his Methodism class meeting gave the world one of the most effective models of discipleship. Wesley pragmatically gathered those who inquired after his preaching sessions into large groups and then into groups of ten to twelve to allow for more eventual interactions. The system of interlocking groups put together was designed to help people grow toward the likeness of Christ. That is, an interlocking system of small groups to help believers connect in relationship with each other and openly discuss struggles in their Christian lives. The groups, particularly, the class and band groups helped believers experience transformation in their lives. Wesley insisted that there is "no holiness but social holiness." By this, Wesley meant that people best grow in love for God and neighbour by gathering together to "watch over one another in love"⁴². In other words, spiritual transformation occurs best in community. The first small group, the beginning group which Wesley named the *Trial Band*, was a small group for people who were casually curious about God. Most, if not all, were not believers but had a sincere desire to know more

⁴¹ Watson, Kevin M. "Forerunners of the Early Methodist Band Meeting," *Methodist Review*, Vol. 2, 2010, 1-31.

⁴² Kevin M. Watson, "John Wesley's Structure and Theology of Discipleship." *OxfordScholarshipOnline*, 2017), p. 1.).

about God. The trial band explored and experienced prevenient grace, the grace that goes before belief. The people in this group were on trial to see if they wanted to know God. In this group, a sincere seeker could find guidance and instruction about God (Watson, 1987).

2.1.2 The Class

The next group in the interlocking system was a small group called the Class Meeting⁴³.

Wesley further, gathered his converts into a second network of small groups called the class for personal accountability, behavioural change, leadership training, and the transformation of their communities. The Bible class was the fundamental unit and the cornerstone of Wesley's small group organization. The Wesleyans defined the class system as a fellowship that is a gathering of a little company of Christians in which they share their spiritual experiences and try to help one another.⁴⁴ The tenet of Wesley's plans for the class system was in his realization that being a disciple of Christ was the natural response to the sanctifying grace of God (Watson, 2017:84). The class was a group of about ten to twelve people, both men and women who met weekly to encourage each other and hold one another accountable. The class was made up of more diverse groups of people (Watson, 2017:94). The Classes were intimate gatherings of ten (10) to twelve (12) people who met weekly for personal supervision of their spiritual growth. They met together for study, prayer and general accountability. These class meetings were grouped primarily by where people lived. Class membership was very diverse, including a mixture of different sexes, marital statuses, ages, social standing, and spiritual maturity. There was also diversity in the leadership of a class meeting, as it could be either male or female leaders. The class meetings were an avenue to help people change behaviour.

⁴³ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016), p. 81–82.

⁴⁴ The Methodist Class Book, p.1.

The rules for the class meetings specified the process as “inquiry” and the subject matter as “how their souls prospered⁴⁵.” It was a place that provided support, encouragement and spiritual maturation as Methodists sought to live holy lives (Henderson, 2010). The meeting was not preaching or teaching but a testimony of spiritual condition or one’s personal growth watched over by a lay leader, not a professional person. The class meeting became the most influential of all the sessions. According to Joel Comiskey (2015), the Bible class system was the fundamental unit and the cornerstone of Wesley’s small group organization without which John Wesley and the Wesleyans would not have experienced their amazing success. Wesley’s class meeting was a system, which proved to be one of the most effective tools for making disciples ever developed. Wesley’s vision for the class meeting was that it should be a point of entry into Methodism.

2.1.3 The Society

The large group that John Wesley put his followers in was called the Society. As the number of the classes grew, clusters of them were put together to constitute societies. Once a member of a society, a person would be required to belong to a class (Thompson, 2010). Thus, the class was a subdivision of the society meeting. Membership into the Society was simply the desire of the person “to flee from the wrath to come”. That is, all persons who sincerely desired to be saved from their sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who sought to have fellowship with Christ Himself and His people and take up the duties and privileges of membership were welcome into the Society⁴⁶. This is affirmed by Bratcher⁴⁷ who says there is

⁴⁵ David Werner. John Wesley’s Question: “How is Your Doing?” *The Asbury Journal* 65/2 (2010), p. 70.

⁴⁶ *John Wesley’s Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*

⁴⁷ Bratcher, *The General Rules of the Methodist Class Meetings*, 2018 104

only one condition required of those who desire admission into the society: a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins. It is therefore expected of all who continue in the society to desire salvation through Christ. The class meeting was a tool for learning Methodist doctrine. It is acknowledged by Bloom (2004) that: Anyone living in New York in the late 1700s with an interest in joining John Street Methodist Episcopal Church was required to attend a weekly class meeting. After six months of learning about Christian doctrine from class leaders, hearing the testimonies of regular members and making their own professions of faith, those who had been admitted on trial might be recommended for full membership or continued as probationary members⁴⁸. It means that the class meetings were mandatory for all members. It was however expected that new entrants would profess Christian faith and then go through six months preparation before such are recommended to full membership. Bloom states that in relation to the earliest stages of the class system, it was apparent that the spiritual vitality and sect-like quality of New York City Methodism and the entire denomination were bound up closely with the Wesleyan class meeting⁴⁹. In his essay, *From Sect to Church in British Methodism*, John H. Chamberlayne (1964) notes, “It is clear that to ‘join the Methodists’ meant withdrawal from much social life and the necessity to find one's pleasures among the faithful members of the local Society.” As the societies grew in numbers, so did the need for more accountability for the members of the societies. In 1738 John Wesley wrote a four-page *Rules for the Band Societies* in which he states, “The design of our meeting is, to obey that command of God, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” As well, Wesley gives a list of suggested

⁴⁸ Bloom, *Class Meeting, a part of Methodist History*, have relevance, 2004.

⁴⁹ Bloom, *Class Meeting, a part of Methodist History*, have relevance, 2004.

questions to search the soul of those in attendance, but there were five mandatory questions that had to be asked to each person in attendance:

1. What sin have you committed since our last Meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?

Rules for the Societies were the primary framework for the class meetings. All Methodists who were in the society meetings were placed into a class meeting and were expected to attend it regularly, or else they were no longer a society member⁵⁰. The Methodist societies met for worship and doctrinal instruction several times a week. By far, the most popular and highest attended meetings were the Sunday night meetings. Another favourite meeting time for the society meetings was early in the morning before work⁵¹. One cannot talk about Wesley's Society without talking about his doctrine. The Wesleyan doctrine would not be complete without the significant doctrines of entire sanctification and perfectionism⁵². Entire sanctification is explained as an intense personal experience confronting the Christian with the presence of God; a post conversion experience that allows a Christian to live a sinless life (Hill, 2012). It was the Methodist second blessing described as 'perfect love', 'Christian perfection' and 'heart purity' all in relation to the idea of an experience, which perfectly

⁵⁰ D. Michael Henderson, 2010, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, p.93.

⁵¹ Michael Henderson, 2016, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, Rafiki Books, Wilmore, KY. p. 88..

⁵² Watson Kevin M. (2017). "John Wesley's Structure and Theology of Discipleship." *Oxford Scholarship Online*, p. 1.

sanctified the believer. The question is whether all Methodists conform to this rich store of biblical insights. Were the Methodists found as true believers who continually worked out their salvation, built their faith, prayed in the Spirit, dwelt in God's love, waited for God's mercy and convinced others about the truth as spelt out in the afore-mentioned doctrines? Perhaps, they did this to a very large extent. That is why eventually the global missions began.

2.1.4 Leadership

Lay leadership was key to the success of John Wesley's class system. Lay men and women were appointed, not elected, as leaders of the classes. There were no academic qualifications required for leadership, and no course qualified people to be leaders. The primary qualification was faithfulness not education. They were recognized for their moral and spiritual character and trained but not made leaders. They were, or they were not leaders. (Morgan, 2014:4). Class leaders were entrusted with visiting their members at least once a week, in the member's home. It was in this manner that the class leader would be able to give an account of each member of the class to either Wesley or the clergy that was appointed as shepherd of the society. During a home visit the leaders would have first-hand knowledge on the state of the souls of those in their charge, as well as any obstacles to the members in their personal pursuit of holiness (Atkinson, 1974:13, 101). There were three primary rules for the classes:

1. Do no harm, and avoid evil in every kind.
2. Do good of every possible sort, and as far as possible to all men.
3. Attend upon all the ordinances of God.

The classes themselves did have fixed agendas, differing from the less formal style of the band meetings (Watson, p.110). While bands were voluntary groups for the people that desired spiritual maturity, the classes were mandatory for anyone that belonged to the Methodist societies.

Comiskey (2000:110) maintains that a large part of the success in the class system had to do with the leadership. Classes developed from the Methodist Societies and were divided by neighbourhoods. The closeness or proximity of the class leaders to their class helped develop the class leader's position into more of a pastoral role. In the early, formative development of the classes, the leaders would report directly to John Wesley about the spiritual state of those in the class (Heitzenrater, 2013: 118). A few key principles that Wesley established were that:

- i. The leaders in the classes were appointed. Selection of leadership was based on moral and spiritual character, as well as common sense. The majority of the leaders were women (Comiskey 2000: 39).
- ii. The leader of the class was responsible not only for the financial giving, but for the personal oversight of the class members (Thompson, 2010). Spiritual oversight was shared (Dean 1985:113), so there was plural leadership in the classes; that is, more than one leader. Leaders are to create an atmosphere of trust for all members and to provide spiritual oversight or provide pastoral care to others as well as to carry the concerns of the class throughout the week. Class meetings provided community and the development of class relationship and spiritual accountability for those who were struggling with habitual issues.

- iii. Also, it was required of the class leader to lead by example. A typical class meeting began with singing and prayer after which all members sit down and the leader “then relates to them his own experience during the preceding week. This includes his joys, and his sorrows, his hopes and his fears, his conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil” (Watson 1987:95-96). The leader thus sets the tone with his own life example after which he “proceeds to inquire into the state of every soul present ...” (1987:96).

2.1.5 Wesley’s Church Growth Strategy

Being a Christian requires community and fellowship for faith to mature. Meeting together offers Christians opportunities to be renewed in worship, enriched in fellowship and challenged to explore their new faith. This is especially true for small groups. According to George Hunter (1987:56), Wesley was a church growth strategist who “...was driven to multiplying ‘classes’ for these served best as recruiting groups, as ports of entry for new people, and for involving awakened people with the gospel and power.” Wesley would preach and then invite the people to join a class. His first objective in his preaching was the starting of classes (Hunter 1987:57). Wesley’s preaching always had two primary objectives:

1. To awaken people
2. To enroll awakened people in a class, that is a lay led redemptive cell (Hunter 1987:58).

A large part of the success in the class system had to do with the *leadership*. Selection of leadership was based on moral and spiritual character, as well as common sense (Dean, 1983:33). In the classes, there was also plural leadership, that is, more than one leader.

Spiritual oversight was shared (Dean 1985:113). Groups were not started unless there was leadership to manage the group.

Dean (1983:33) reported that hundreds of thousands of people participated in the small group system. Snyder (1980) indicated that “By the time Methodism had reached 10,000 members at the end of the century, the movement must have had over 10,000 class and band leaders with perhaps an equal or larger total of other leaders (Snyder 1980:63). This system of bands and classes continued for over a century with some facts as follows (Snyder 1980:62): The movement began in 1738, and by 1768 it had forty (40) Circuits⁵³ and 27,341 members. In 1778 the number of Circuits had increased to sixty (60) with 40,089 members; and ninety-nine (99) Circuits in 1788 with 66,375 members and 149 Circuits with 101, 712 members in 1798.

John Wesley acted very much like a Moses in the supervision of his system. He kept on stepping back and delegating to higher levels of leadership. According to Joel Comiskey (2000), Kenneth Scott Latourette⁵⁴ indicated that “For a time Wesley himself visited each of the societies to supervise them and enforce discipline. As the classes increased it became impossible to supervise the Leaders directly so he assembled his preachers in ‘*Annual Conferences*.’ As societies and preachers further grew in numbers, he established Circuits with traveling preachers and soon, as an assistant to himself, a superintendent’ was placed in charge of each circuit. He himself kept an autocratic control of the whole” (1917: 027).

Wesley would not start a class, if he could not manage it, and would only start as many

⁵³ A Circuit consists of a number of Societies under the pastoral care of one or more Ministers. A Society is a local organization that meets as congregation for public worship.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette (1917) *A history of Christianity*

classes as could be effectively managed; nor would he preach where he could not enroll people into classes (Hunter 1987:56). The formation of new classes was by far the most frequent approach to growth” (Dean 1985:266).

2.1.6 Impact of Wesley’s Methodism

Davies⁵⁵ writing about the impact of Wesley’s small groups wrote, “Wesley accurately emphasized the functional nature of the church based on his respective culture’s needs. He realized the primacy of personal inward reality and consequently accented the living relationships of believers over formal tradition. This emphasis met the need of the populace during Wesley’s lifetime. Hundreds of thousands of people became true believers. Social climate similarities between our present generation and the Industrial Revolution upheaval in England have been documented by scholars (loneliness, isolation, despair, alienation, changes in family patterns, rapid advances in technology and so on). John Wesley desired the group be a warm, friendly fellowship of fellow strugglers that represented the broad diversity of the people of England. These similarities make the ground ripe for the present-day church to again place major emphasis on the relationship aspect⁵⁶.

Methodism was an experiential system. Where many church leaders were telling people what they ought to do, Methodists were telling each other what they *were* doing. Theoretical, hypothetical or speculative discussion was not allowed in any of the meetings. The class accomplished many purposes including Christian fellowship, spiritual growth, and outreach,

⁵⁵ Watson, David Lowes. “Class Leaders and Class Meetings: Recovering a Methodist Tradition for a Changing Church,” *Doctrines and Disciplines*, October 1990, pgs. 245–266.

⁵⁶ Davies, James A. 1961 “Small Groups: Are They Really So New?”. *Great Book and Small Groups* Free Press of Glencoe The Structure of Positive Interpersonal Relations in Small Groups Understanding small groups, 1967, 66-74 New York: McGraw-Hill.

but the primary purpose of these class meetings was to foster a sense of mutual accountability among the members (Thompson, 2010). The small, close knit bands served those people who desired to mature in their Christian life for Christian perfection. There were bands for those who desired to have a closer union during the process of sanctification. There were also penitent bands for those people that had backslid, allowing them to repent and begin the sanctification process anew. The spiritual direction of the societies, classes, and bands was steered by John Wesley. Wesley did not believe in the lay person having a vote in who would preach and teach (Dreyer, 1986). The formation of class and band groups by Wesley gave valuable insight to help with transformation in the lives of believers in eighteenth-century England. As a Methodist, it seemed much of the change desired in Christian life is contained in John Wesley and his methods. A great strength of Wesley was his organizational ability. He paid close attention to detail. Each one of Wesley's small groups related to one of their major theological concepts of grace⁵⁷.

Wesley was very intentional and particular about placing individuals into these small groups in order to foster and encourage their spiritual growth. One of the main aspects of these groups was accountability, which Wesley understood as foundational to faith development. Crisp (2015) maintained that John Wesley instituted the class meetings with the aim of attending to the spiritual growth needs of his members. These spiritual growth needs included the opportunity to confess to one another about their failings, to support each other in prayer, give testimonies, and for general fellowship. Wesley considered change in people's lives as a process, which needed to be affected through the class meetings.

⁵⁷ Stafford, Tim. "Finding God in Small Groups." An Interview with Tom Albin. *Christianity Today*, August 200. p.42

According to Gooch (2006:9), the class meetings were required to support and to hold each other accountable in their Christian living and social interaction. Class leaders who were required to see each member of their group at least once a week staffed these classes. Among other duties, the leaders were expected to “enquire how their souls prosper, to advise, reprove, comfort, and to receive what they were willing to give toward the relief of preachers, church and poor” (Gooch 2006:28). Thus, Wesley considered the class leaders as key players in the spiritual development of the church members. The fact that Wesley expected his leaders to build a relational engagement with their members is evidenced by his insistence that the leaders should meet their members at least once a week. Watson (1987:98) writes, “It was the business of the class leader to see each person in his class once a week at least.” Thus, the currency of the leader’s interaction with his members was not to be erratic. Equally, it was incumbent upon class members to patronize the class meeting and thus make themselves available for discipling. John Wesley was particular about members’ attendance and participation in the class meeting. According to Watson (1987:107), “one general, though unwritten, rule was that three consecutive absences constituted self-expulsion from a class.”

2.1.7 Decline of Methodist Societies and Classes in the West

Wesley’s design for the Methodist societies, classes and bands was little churches within the big church (*ecclesiolae in ecclesia*). During the life of John Wesley, the “big church” was the Church of England. According to Crisp, (2010) after Wesley’s death the Methodist societies, classes, and bands that he had so carefully designed began to change. The American Methodists desired to break ties with the mother church and therefore formed their own new

denomination. As a result of the separation of the Methodist Church in America from the Church of England, the little church within the big church model that Wesley had patterned was beginning to unravel.

Kevin Watson (1998: 146) also wrote: “But as Methodism began to distance itself from the class meeting, its growth also began to decrease, then stop, and finally decline”. In the first few decades, the meetings were stern and methodical. As time passed, the meetings became less instructive, and more experiential. This moving away from accountability hindered the classes. Unfortunately, knowing that does not always translate into living it. “It is difficult to avoid the inference, that, had the classes been continuing a weekly catechesis which took seriously the accountability for works of obedience and the means of grace as well as the shaping of religious experience, their changing social context would have produced a different record from the inbred religiosity available to us in the sort of literature⁵⁸.” As time continued, the class meetings became burdensome to its members and participation waned. Arguably, with the decline of the class meeting came the decline of the Methodist Church. As reported elsewhere some aspects of Christianity have become privatized, individualistic and lacking accountability, it is also true that participating in intimate groups, where people share their lives and faith, runs counter to such trends (Crisp, 2010).

According to Crisp (2010), John Wesley was fighting a spiritual battle and desired a true Christian revival. He believed that people were showing the outward form of Christianity by not doing anything that was expressly forbidden by the gospel. This is evidenced by his addresses in his sermon *The Almost Christian*. His call to change was to get people to make

⁵⁸ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 1987, p.146.

that inward change of the heart through loving God and neighbour (Outler & Heitzenrater, p. 62-68). The inward change that Wesley so desired to see in people is the purpose behind the Methodist societies, classes, and bands. After John Wesley's death the structure of these Methodist groups began to deteriorate.

Andrew Goodhead (2010) in the book, *A Crown and a Cross*, offers some suggestions for the decline of the class meetings within the Methodist Churches. He asserts that the classes became regimented with a repetitive format. Goodhead also attributes the decline to large class sizes and untrained, inept class leaders (Hardt, 2011). This deterioration of the Methodist classes was all the more evident in the United States where the shortage of ordained ministers was a painful reality for a developing nation that needed the sound doctrine of Wesley.

Crisp (2010) reported that in the 1850's Leonidas Rosser, of Richmond Virginia wrote about the Methodist classes and the role of the class leaders. Rosser set forth twenty-three questions the class leaders should be asking each person in the class. This was much more rigid than the precedent that had been set by John Wesley. The unrealistic demands that were placed on the class members led to a decline in class membership as people felt helpless to live up to these demands (Watson, 1987:44).

Watson (1991) indicated that another factor that contributed to the decline of the Methodist classes was the formation of the Methodist Sunday School Union in 1827. The purpose of the Sunday school was fundamentally different from that of the class meetings. Sunday school

was developed as a means for Biblical training and instruction, while the class meeting was to provide accountability for the discipleship of persons. Sunday school became more appealing to the masses because a person could receive the Biblical knowledge without the spiritual discipline (1991:51).

McElhanney (1992) asserted that a contributing factor in the decline of Methodist classes, societies, and bands in the United States were the divisions within Methodism that were occurring. Splits and schisms were fracturing the fledgling Methodist Episcopal Church in the late 1700's through the mid 1900's. Though these splits and schisms led to the extinction of the Wesleyan designed classes, societies, and bands, the end result was the emergence of the United Methodist Church (1992:57).

Leslie F. Church (1949) writes in *The Early Methodist People* that the most important development from the Methodist movement is the class meeting. Church notes, "It was only when the idea of the class-meeting was born, in 1742, that Methodism had its family hearth round which all could gather, whether they were beginners or veterans, and feel themselves at home, their Father's welcome guests. This was the 'crowning glory' and it has done more than any other Methodist organization to influence the world (Thompson, 2010)."

John Wesley said, "The church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples⁵⁹." However, the Methodists in the West rather than focussing on their heritage to continue with disciples making are now experimenting with Church Growth Movement

⁵⁹ Disciple blog Admin., "Making Disciples: 6 Keys from the Master," *DiscipleBlog.com*, September 6, 2012, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.discipleblog.com/2012/09/making-disciples-6-keys-from-the-master/>.

strategies. As Crisp (2010) asserted he wonders if John Wesley could even have imagined what the world would look like today. John Wesley's use of the societies, band meetings and the *class meetings* proved to have a huge impact on Methodism. The class meetings became so important to Wesley that he feared that the "decline" of the meetings would bring about the decline of the Methodist Church. It is reported that a number of Methodist Churches in Europe and America bear witness to his prediction today (Crisp, 2015). Kevin Watson (1998) wrote "But as Methodism began to distance itself from the class meeting, its growth also began to decrease, then stop and finally decline". However, it is more appropriate to evaluate a weak system to establish the cause rather than replace the Bible class system with a variant of it that appears to have deviated from the course (Watson, 2017). Hardt, believes that the reintroduction of the class meeting as an integral part of United Methodism could enhance unity among the denomination's members, develop leadership and attract new members⁶⁰. Hardt assumes class meetings used to attract members into the Methodist Church hence he recommends continuation of class meetings.

2.2 THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA

The establishment of most Methodist churches (Societies) in Ghana follows the pattern of John Wesley's Methodism, and yielded very good results until quite recently. The Church in Ghana has from its inception used small groups termed Bible class meeting for discipling its members and for its growth. Membership with the church denotes membership at the Bible class meeting. Mere attendance at Sunday Divine Service albeit how regularly one attends does not make one a member of the church. Many members were won through the Bible classes (held in the homes of the leaders or other prominent member's house). Other small

⁶⁰ P.F. Hardt, *The Soul of Methodism: The Class Meeting System in Early New York Methodism*. 2000, p.16

group organization the church used for evangelism and discipleship include the *Guild, Boys and Girls Brigade, Girls, Men's and Women's Fellowship, Christ Little Band* and outdoor evangelization termed *Camp Meetings*. The Bible class meeting of Methodist Church Ghana together with other programmes helped the Church to construct a firm and non-negotiable image of the Wesleyan tradition in Ghana. The Methodist class system of the founding fathers formed the basis of spiritual and numerical growth and lessons for contemporary Wesleyans. The members make new converts and meet as a small group; they become affiliated to a nearby Methodist Church and attend church service there even if it means walking a long distance to attend the service⁶¹. Churches were 'planted', and schools established that offered indigenous Christian education; and so, the Methodist mission expanded throughout the country to the adjoining communities along the coast and eventually to Dahomey (Now Benin) and to Nigeria and later to Gambia⁶². The church impacted the local communities through agriculture and industry⁶³ as well.

2.2.1 History of Methodist Church Ghana

A small group in Gold Coast was known as "Bible Band" and also "The Meeting" formed by a group of young men in 1831 that later became known as the Methodist Church in 1835 has a similar history as those in America and England (Bartels, 1965; Essamuah, 2010). Notable among the Band members were William de Graft and George Blankson (Walton, 2015). The young men's request to a sea Captain by name Captain Potter from Bristol for Bibles brought

⁶¹ F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.11

⁶² F.L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 16

⁶³ Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian*, 12.

the first Methodist Missionary Joseph Dunwell to the Gold Coast on 1st January 1835⁶⁴. The young men were said to be already united in seeking the way of salvation. The presence of this missionary began the Methodist Church Ghana (then Gold Coast). Kpobi (2008) affirms that: In 1834, the Methodist Conference in Britain endorsed the selection of Joseph Dunwell who was then 27 years old, as missionary to Cape Coast to give guidance and leadership to the Bible Band there. Dunwell arrived at Cape Coast on 1st Jan. 1835 full of zeal and courage, but without much life experience and theological training. One week later he formed the first Methodist Class in Ghana made up of 12 members from the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in Cape Coast. The class meetings became a daily event occurring at the same time every evening where the Bible would be read in English and explained in Fanti⁶⁵.

Essamuah (2010) affirms that Joseph Dunwell as the person sent to the Gold Coast presently called Ghana by the British Conference of the Methodist Church. Despite Dunwell's inexperience in life as well as having less theological training, he continued with the class meetings which were the practice of the British Conference. Since then, the Methodist Church in Ghana has continued with the Bible class system to date, with some modification; and eventually grew in numbers to become one of the leading churches in Ghana, if not the leading church⁶⁶. Those converted to Christianity (Methodists) returned home with their new found faith, in turn made new converts and met as a small group (Bible Class) and attended church service in nearby towns with Methodist church despite the distance they had to travel.

⁶⁴ F. L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.11

⁶⁵ Achinakrom Souvenir Programme, Centenary Anniversary 1902-2002, held from 5th -11th August, 2002

⁶⁶ C. B. Essamuah, *Genuinely Ghanaian: A History of the Methodist Church Ghana, 1961-2000*, Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 2010, p.128

As observed abroad, most of the places where the Methodist Church was established begun through Class Meetings.

2.2.2 Structural Arrangement of the Methodist Church Ghana

The entire membership of the Methodist Church Ghana is divided into smaller groups. The national level church known in Ghana Methodist parlance as the Connexion⁶⁷. Nationally, the church is divided into twenty 20 dioceses⁶⁸; subdivisions of the whole church. Each diocese is also divided into Circuits. Each Circuit⁶⁹ is made up of a number of Societies. The term Society⁷⁰ for the Methodist Church Ghana is a local congregation. A number of classes put together form a Society. Each Society is made up of Bible Classes. This shows that the class meetings constitute the basic or foundational unit upon which the whole church dwells and this is why much attention should be given to the classes as John Wesley did.

2.2.3 The Methodist Church Ghana Membership

The only qualification for membership of the Methodist Church Ghana is personal desire for membership. So, membership of the Church is not limited to a certain group of persons but those who desire to know more about Christ and those with sincere faith in Christ. These members after public declaration of their faith and desire are admitted into the Bible Class. The understanding is that all members of the Class are also members of the Church. The Methodist Constitution states that all members of the Church shall have their names entered into a class book and shall be

⁶⁷ Connexion is a representative word for the entire Methodist Church Ghana. The National Body of the church.

⁶⁸ Diocese of Methodist Church Ghana is composed of a number of Circuits in the same area, as determined by Conference from time to time.

⁶⁹ A Circuit of Methodist Church Ghana, consists of one or more Societies under the pastoral care of one or more Ministers. It is a distinct authoritative unit within a Diocese in which usually several Societies conveniently situated for the purpose, are banded together for pastoral oversight, mutual support and Christian service.

⁷⁰ A Society is a local organization that meets as congregation for public worship

placed under the care of class leaders⁷¹. The weekly class meeting has from the beginning proved to be most effective means of maintaining among Methodists true fellowship in Christian experience. The members are maintained through regular attendance at the class meetings⁷² where true Christian fellowship is to be experienced.

There are four main categories of members in the Church: the *Junior Members* (these are those young members who have been baptized but not confirmed) and the *Full Members* are those who seek the fellowship and nurture of the church, have been baptized and confirmed, and are not under discipline, such members might have made personal faith and commitment to Christ. The third group of members are the *Adherents* (these are those who are attached to a society, may be baptized or not, seek the fellowship and are nurtured by the church but who for some reason are unable to accept the full discipline of the church for full membership⁷³). That is, such persons for some reasons are unable to adhere to all the practices and beliefs of the Church. Another group is the *Catechumen*. They are persons described as inquirers; they include those from Islam or other faiths but seek fellowship with the church. They may be given some form of public recognition on being so enrolled and have their names entered into the class book. All those who have their names entered into the class books are members of the Class of the Methodist Church Ghana⁷⁴.

⁷¹ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*, 2000 Revised Edition. Origin & Beliefs, 6 (3). p.17.

⁷² The Methodist Church Ghana, *the Constitution and Standing Orders*. 2000 Revised Edition. Origin & Beliefs, 6 (3). p.17

⁷³ MCG, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*, 2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 702 (5), p.106.

⁷⁴ MCG, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*, 2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 706, p.108

2.2.4 Bible Class Meeting of The Methodist Church Ghana

The Methodist Church Ghana is typically known for its class meeting which is the smallest groupings of the main body where members meet to study the word of God. It is an important discipleship forum which all members in the church are required to be part of. There is here, an evident relationship between the command of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 and the class meeting as an implementation tool for the command to make disciples. Making disciples encompasses evangelism and establishing the members won which would result in both qualitative and quantitative growth of the church. Christ enjoins Christians to make disciples, that is to initiate members into Christian community, and to teach them to mature in the faith. The class meeting serves as the means of discipling members who are won into the fold of the Methodist Church through biblical teaching. This fellowship enables the new converts to live their newfound faith.

2.2.5 Class Membership

The membership of a Methodist Society/congregation is divided into Bible classes. They constitute the smallest units of the church. According to the *Methodist Constitution and Standing Orders*, a class is a gathering together of a little company of Christians where they share their spiritual experiences and to help one another⁷⁵. Thus, all the classes together constitute the Society. The meeting of the smaller group is called *Class Meeting*. According to the Methodist Church Ghana Constitution and Standing Orders a *Society Class* shall normally be sufficiently small to encourage personal sharing of experiences; but where a *Society Class* is necessarily large, or it appears otherwise expedient, an Assistant Leader may be appointed to help the

⁷⁵ The Methodist Class Book, p.1

Leader in the execution of their duties⁷⁶ therefore, Bible classes are made up of about twelve to twenty-five members, where the members meet weekly to study the Word of God and to pray together; and for discipling of members. The class members among other things encourage personal sharing of experiences in the form of testimonies and prayer.

2.2.6 The Leadership of the Class Meeting

Every class is expected to have at least a leader who oversees the affairs of the class. The eligibility of a leader is enshrined in the Church's Constitution as follows: no person shall be eligible for appointment as a leader unless he or she has been a *Full Member* for not less than three years and if married has complied with the requirements.⁷⁷

The appointment of class leaders is done through leaders meeting. The Minister in charge of the Society nominates leaders for appointment by the leaders meeting. When the leaders' meeting approves such appointments, nominees are then trained to become class leaders. The leaders are expected to lead members of the class to study the Word of God, and so if a leader cannot read, it will be difficult to do the task assigned to him, in view of that the constitution states that: No one shall be appointed a leader for the first time unless he/she is able to read the Bible⁷⁸. Ability to read is one of the criteria for the appointment of class leaders. It is important to note that, the Minister may not just nominate someone to be appointed as class leader through Leaders' Meeting without observing certain qualities inherent in the person. One of such qualities is discipline, without it the other gifts, however great, will never realize their highest possibilities.

⁷⁶ The Methodist Church Ghana, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*.2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 725 (3). P.112.

⁷⁷ MCG, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*, 2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 725 (2). p.112.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Sanders describes qualities of a good leader and asserts “A leader is a person who has first submitted willingly and learned to obey a discipline imposed from without, but who then imposes on himself a much more rigorous discipline from within, those who rebel against authority and scorn self-discipline seldom qualify for leadership of a high order. They shirk the rigors and sacrifices it demands and reject the divine disciplines that are involved”⁷⁹.

Sanders is of the view that a leader must be a person who willingly submits to the disciplines of an organization, that person is self-disciplined and has the desire to sacrifice his whole life in obedience to the authority and does not rise up against authority.

The class leaders are to see each person in his class at least, once a week to find out how the members are faring in their walk with God. Class leaders are also to meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week, to inform the minister of members’ progress; and to pay to the stewards what they have received of their classes in the week preceding⁸⁰. The leaders are expected to serve the members and not to lord it over them; but are to be servants (servant-leadership); putting the needs of their members before theirs. Therefore, it is those who are willing to serve and are committed that are appointed as leaders. A class leader should be able to influence others to study of the word of God and pray for them, and to respond by contributing financially toward the cause of the church.

The class leaders are therefore expected to be persons of integrity and committed. The leader shares the spiritual and pastoral oversight of a Christian community responsible with the minister. He or she is to meet the class weekly and to visit those who are sick or in trouble.

⁷⁹ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 1976, p.44

⁸⁰ *The General Rules of the Methodist Class Meeting*, 2012

The Methodist Church Ghana's constitution also gives the leaders responsibility to receive any payment authorized for the support of the Church and to pay them promptly to the society steward or any other authorized person. The class leaders also mark the attendance of the members in the class books at weekly meetings. But has no power to insert any name in a class book or remove any name from a class book, but he/she may bring before the leaders' meeting the names of any who desire to become church members⁸¹. This is to provide the necessary safeguard against any abuse of power and unauthorized bestowal of membership on just anybody. The leaders' meeting holds the collective responsibility of receiving persons into membership.

2.2.7 The Materials for the Class Meetings

The main sources of materials for the class meeting are the Bible, the Methodists hymns book and the *Weekly Bible Lessons* book. The *Weekly Bible Lessons* book is structured in such a way that every week a relevant and related topic is treated in each class. The *Weekly Bible Lessons* book was introduced in 1998 at the 37th Annual Conference held in Sunyani⁸². This has brought uniformity of biblical teaching at the class meetings connexionally. They are published in English and four Ghanaian languages (Twi, Ga, Ewe and Mfantse). Prior to the introduction of *Weekly Bible Lessons*, the class leaders were free to teach topics of their choice using their own materials and source documents.

⁸¹ MCG, *The Constitution and Standing Orders*, 2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 725 (8). P.113

⁸² *The Methodist Church Ghana, 35th Conference Agenda*. Accra: MCG, 1998, p. BOM 74.

2.2.8 The Benefits of the Class Meeting to Methodist Church Ghana

The class meeting has great benefits for the church's discipleship and church growth efforts. All the major concepts and dimensions of discipleship can be found in Wesley's class system: The use of the Bible to study and to teach members, leadership styles, modelling, and mentoring. Henry Ward Beecher said, "The greatest thing John Wesley gave to the world is the Methodist class meeting"⁸³. This suggests that the class meeting that John Wesley instituted cuts across cultural boundaries and therefore is also relevant to the church in Ghana in her discipleship efforts. According to Henderson (2016) Dwight Moody, nineteenth-century revivalist connected with the Holiness Movement also offered high praise of the class meeting when he said, "The Methodist class-meetings are the best institutions for training converts the world ever saw." This is a ringing endorsement by someone who was not a Methodist. John Wesley's approach to discipleship and the methods he incorporated to help in the transformation of believers into the likeness of Christ continued to receive high commendation. The power of the class meeting in breaking down long-standing social barriers can be seen in this quote from an analysis of class rolls of early societies: "There is complete absence of class distinction in these lists. They represent a "family" whose spiritual kinship was recognized by each member. They came together in an intimacy that could not recognize social barriers, and the names of the people who met on perfect equality each appear side by side whether they are described as gentlemen or laborers, yeoman or apothecaries. Those who could enter a Methodist society must first abandon all idea of caste"⁸⁴. Henderson commenting on the class meeting and its diversity said, "Looking back from the perspective of the twentieth century, the Wesleyan class meeting seems to have been

⁸³ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Rafiki Books, 2016), p. 88.

⁸⁴ Church, Leslie F. *More About the Early Methodist People*. London: The Epworth Press, 1949, pp. 2–3.

the first and probably the most powerful levelling agent which helped break up the rigid British caste system and provide upward social mobility⁸⁵

The class meeting promotes teaching and learning of the word of God, which helps members to acquire knowledge about God. In other words, the faith of members is enhanced through the study of the word of God. The Past Presiding Bishop of Methodist Church Ghana, Aboagye-Mensah, in his book *John Wesley and the Methodist*, (2005:100) stated that submission to the authority of Scripture is the way of mature disciples. The class meeting is meant to prepare Christians to mature. Mature Christians exemplify a many-faceted lifestyle that includes worship, faith obedience and hope. Every Christian is called to worship God, to trust and obey him, and to look with confident hope towards the future.

The class meeting also enhances fellowship among members. Stott is of the view that God has given us to each other in His family so we need to be humble enough to talk to others including parents, in order to seek their counsel, for wisdom is found in those who take advice⁸⁶. The fact is that within the fellowship good counsel could be sought; the class might be a mixture of professionals who could be of help to each other. The class system makes it easier for members to know themselves, and also to relate to each other more closely and freely. This way each member of the class is built up. It is worthy of note that the Wesleyan class meeting focuses more on building up members to grow in spirit and in stature, unlike what pertains in other forms of the small group where such are influenced by social sciences.

⁸⁵ D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*. p. 96

⁸⁶ J. Stott. (2004). *The Contemporary Christian*, p.131

Reinhardt (2013:72) commenting on the cell-group (small group) meetings of the ICGC,⁸⁷ stated, “ICGC’s cell-group (small group) meetings are considered important moments of horizontal interaction among church members, who often recognize these associations as strategic opportunities for connecting with fellow Christians, making friends, professional contacts and even meeting romantic partners.” This of course seems more like a social club in context unlike the Wesleyan class meeting spiritual growth agenda.

The whole counsel of God is uncovered at the class meeting and therefore the system promotes good and practical Christian living. It helps people to be able to relate to one another, therefore, good neighborliness is enhanced. Respect for human dignity and helping others in times of troubles are acquired. Bloom (2004) affirms that the more intimate setting of the class meeting also provides an opportunity for closer relationships to be formed and allows members to agree to disagree. By praying together, and talking together and talking about personal experiences, you tend to bond with those people⁸⁸. In effect, the class meeting provides opportunity for interpersonal relationship between members through these means: they are able to pray together, converse among themselves and share personal experiences.

Another important benefit that we derive from the class meeting is the appointment of more leaders. The class is not expected to be large. As the number increases more classes are created. Each class is expected to have at least a leader to lead. This is affirmed by Guptill⁸⁹ who said “With John Wesley’s societies growing quickly in London and Bristol, Wesley

⁸⁷ International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) in Ghana.

⁸⁸ Bloom, *Class Meeting, a part of Methodist History*, have relevance, 2004.

⁸⁹ S.H. Guptill, *The Methodist Class Meeting: Principles of Spiritual Formation and Application to Christian Discipleship*, 2010. Retrieved Nov.15, 2012.

realized that he could not handle all the ministerial duties of this group by himself. He began to train and to develop lay leadership that would handle the band meetings, member visitation, and the finances. He saw how delegating certain tasks to worthy lay members was not only efficient, but also helped in the spiritual growth of the participating members”. Guptill suggests that the establishment of the class meetings affords the Church’s opportunity to train more new leaders.

Since membership was growing there was the need for Wesley to delegate certain responsibilities such as visiting members in their homes and workshops as well as handling the collection of monies from members. There were efficient lay leaders who also helped the spiritual growth of the Church. Hardt is reported to have said testimonies of persons at class meetings contributed significantly to new members. For him class meetings were compulsory and strengthened their faith. A lot of members were developed to become leaders since the classes were many and growing larger and could not be handled by few leaders; each class had a leader and sometimes an assistant leader. This also provided opportunity for members to mentor others. Hardt (2000) questioned why some Methodist churches have latched on the Class System since some nondenominational mega-churches are using small groups to strengthen their church programmes. For him such an important reviving process should be far from being a historical object of the past. It can enhance existing church efforts at initiation and assimilation into the body of Christ. In Ghana, denominations like the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) and Lighthouse Chapel International have put in place cell groups or small ministries to disciple members into maturity, According to Reinhardt (2013:68), “In churches like the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) and Lighthouse Chapel International, spiritual maturation is normatively encompassed by discipleship programs and so-called small ministries or specialized sub-ecclesiastical bodies regulated by the church. The finality of these associations is to transform what they call “visitors” into “members” and members into

“maturing Christians.”⁹⁰ He notes that in these denominations [ICGC and LCI] the process of becoming a church member starts with mandatory attendance to discipleship programs led by lay leaders or assistant pastors.⁹¹ Class sessions are regulated by a structured programme spanning over a period of time. Class interactions follow the outline provided by four booklets produced by the church and donated to the students. They are divided into modules called “New Believers” (5 sessions), “Membership” (10 sessions), “Maturity” (12 sessions) and “Ministry” (14 sessions)... These booklets also integrate new members into the church’s statistical apparatus.⁹² Even though this small group or ministry is seen as a tool for discipleship, the point of departure from the Methodist class meeting is that the ICGC and LCI discipleship classes terminate after the 14 sessions of “Ministry” classes while the Methodist class meeting provides permanent membership for all Methodists.

People find it difficult to read the Scriptures and pray in their various homes effectively or to do so regularly. The class meeting helps members, at least to pray and study the word of God weekly, thereby making them grow spiritually. Some people in the country do not have formal education, and therefore could not read the Bible by themselves. If such persons are left to their fate, they would lose a lot of benefits that is supposed to be derived from personal Bible reading and studies. The class meeting therefore, provides opportunity for such persons also to be nourished by the word of God. Visitations of members are improved. Since the membership is small, about twelve to twenty-five members, people get to know themselves and are able to visit each other especially when it is reported that one is indisposed. These are

⁹⁰ Bruno Mafra Ney Reinhardt (2013:68). “Tapping into the Anointing: Pentecostal Pedagogy, Connectivity and Power in contemporary Ghana.” A PhD dissertation submitted to the University of California, Berkeley.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid. pp.68-69.

some of the many benefits the Church derives from the class system. Bloom refers to Hardt in his book *The Soul of Methodism* when he states that: the revival of class meetings could benefit current members hungering for more spirituality and prospective members wanting a better grounding in the Christian faith. He goes on to say that hearing the testimony of other class participants could help the seekers find clarity for their own faith journeys. Attendance at the weekly meetings, which usually lasted about an hour and a half, was mandatory⁹³.

Evidence from early Methodists both in the West and Ghana revealed that the Wesleyan Bible class meeting that modelled after Jesus' discipleship style is still the best model for discipleship even in these modern times. The model employed small groups that engenders relational discipleship; utilized effective leadership styles and was transformational; and led to both qualitative and quantitative church growth. Deviation from this tried and tested model could lead to a decline in growth or result in a Christ-less growth as indicated about the church growth movement discussed above.

For example, Rick Warren (1995:49) maintains that churches are for the purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism. As well, tradition, finances, programmes, personalities, events, seekers and even buildings can each be the controlling force in a church. He therefore outlines in his book "Purpose Driven Church" five principles that enable a church to grow: Warmer through fellowship; Deeper through discipleship; Stronger through worship; Broader through ministry and Larger through evangelism. He believes that in order for a church to be healthy it must be built around the five New Testament purposes given to the church by Jesus Christ and derived from the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40)

⁹³ Bloom, *Class Meeting, a part of Methodist History, have relevance*, 2004

and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). And that the issue at stake is church health, and not church growth. He believes that if a church is healthy its growth will occur naturally. He urges the church leadership to focus on building people and God will build the church. Warren sees healthy and consistent growth as the result of balancing the five biblical purposes of the church which should be an intentional people-building process. This sound very nice but deviates markedly from Jesus' model of discipleship which is simple and does not include building programmes and strategies. Rick Warren's work, though commendable failed to identify disciple making as the main command given by Christ in Matthew 28:18-20.

Also though most studies reported that relational discipleship increases church growth, Olson (1989:432-447) found evidence to the contrary. Using a questionnaire results from 762 attendees, respondents of five Baptist congregations suggested that the number and quality of friendships available within a congregation heavily influence attendees' church selection decisions. This is not surprising since Olson did not directly assess discipleship strategies but programmes.

In his book "Discipleship for Growth" Foli (1995:21-22) identified the lack of disciples as the main cause of the stymie of Church growth. He reported that there are many Christians as against disciples; and indicated that the call for discipleship is taken by many Christians as the responsibility of only the paid staff of a church rather than the duty of all believers. Foli asserted that the process of disciple making includes recruiting, consolidating, teaching, training, sending and multiplying training and motivating persons to multiply themselves. For him recruiting is making converts through the preaching of the Good News. The recruits if

nurtured through follows up, motivating and teaching them to build up their faith and to reproduce themselves not only the quantitative growth but qualitative as well. Foli believed that one who makes disciples is motivated by love for the unreached and empowerment from the Holy Spirit. He identified the characteristics of a disciple as one who loves God and obeys his word; having a servant heart and willingness to pay the price for doing the will of God.

Asamoah-Gyadu (2011) also contributing to Christian discipleship sees a disciple as one who follows someone with an intention to learn; and that such a person eventually becomes a master. Christian disciple is committed, obedient and humble as required of a disciple. He notes further that theological education is a form of discipleship which students must take seriously. In addition, the Holy Spirit is the best teacher who leads individuals to focus on Christ who is the perfecter of our faith and has endured the cross and reigns in glory. He admonishes Christians to throw away any thing that hinders us from making disciples. He cites a number of passages that call our attention to discipleship such as, Heb.7:24-7, 12:1-2, Luke 14:26-27, 2 Tim 2:3-6.19.

Malphurs (2009) identifies two groups of the disciples as new believers in Christ won through evangelism and those believers in Christ who have grown into maturity through discipleship process. The disciples and the church are responsible also for making new disciples. To Malphurs, disciple making does not end with a person's conversion but is an ongoing process that encourages the believer to follow Christ and become more like him. Similarly, he identifies two groups that Jesus sought to disciple through his message. They are the crowds and the disciples whom he called to follow him. These followers were required to serve and

obey him. He sees Jesus' message to the crowds as evangelism whilst his teaching directed at his disciples were to help them grow into maturity. Malphurs asserts that the process of making disciples involves leading unbelievers to faith in Christ so that they become disciples (Christians). Malphurs also identified a number of strategies that could be used to make disciples so as to ensure successful ministry. For Malphurs what underpins Christian discipleship is the Triune God. He sees the Father grows churches, the Son builds churches and the Spirit transforms churches (Malphurs, 2009:14).

2.2.9 Overview of the Implementation of John Wesley's Class System in Ghana

Over two hundred years have passed since John Wesley, and with time many things have changed. The Methodists, who were considered either a society or sect during the life of John Wesley, have become a full-fledged denomination. However, the spiritual disciplines that were at the heart of Wesley's theology are nowhere to be found today (Maddox, 1998:132). Maddox asserted that the band meetings, love feasts, and watch nights, have been exchanged for pot lucks, church socials, and mid-week dinners.

As Harrison (2010) asked, "Is it the case that believers now go to church and have the outward appearance of godliness, but they deny the power of God or people have separated the two tenants of faith that were designed to complement each other, religious experience and religious belief?" Or people now will choose what parts of the Bible they like and ignore or reject the rest as suggested by Veith (1994:209). Veith claims, people will choose aspects of Christianity that they like, and combine it with other religions and practices such as Buddhism, meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi to make their customized designed faith. (Harrison,

2010) maintains that this mentality has reduced Conservative Christianity into a form of apologetics in attempts to respond to the critics of the Christian faith. To Veith, Evangelical Christianity has been focusing on the *decision theology* and neglecting to make disciples. It has been so busy fighting the postmodern culture that it has only fed into it by creating a Christian subculture. Christians today have their own schools, music, book stores, concerts, and even movies (Veith, 1994:212). It is easy for a Christian to live in the Christian subculture and never grow in their faith. This is where Christian leaders have their biggest challenge and biggest opportunity.

According to Crisp (2010:12), these challenges have not gone unnoticed in the Methodist church; and that in the 1988 Book of Discipline, saw the first modern Methodist response to the call for a return to the Wesleyan roots of mutual accountability; and in 2012 Book of Discipline the topic of accountable discipleship is again addressed:

“Historically class leaders provided lay pastoral leadership, and classes and class meetings were the basic structural means of Christian spiritual formation in the early Methodist societies. Class leaders may be commissioned and classes may be organized within the local congregation for the purpose of forming persons as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ through mutual accountability and support for witnessing to him in the world and for following his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” I would argue that if Christian leaders want to stem the tide of Biblical illiteracy and spiritual apostasy they must return to the Wesleyan system of bands, classes, and societies (p.12).

Crisp (2010), affirms that the return to tradition reached further back than John Wesley, it reaches back to the Bible.

This pattern for Christian formation was key in the Wesleyan classes. Today, we have our Bible class meeting which is similar to the small groups in the Bible. However, our Bible classes may resemble discipleship in form but fall short in the true sense of Biblical discipleship and even that of John Wesley and the early Methodists. Given the boost, the Bible class of Methodist Church Ghana can regain its fervour in the discipleship process. The Bible classes provide the members a forum where they can express their thoughts, feelings and attitudes and gain response from other members of the class. This allows the members to challenge and be challenged by others and thus grow in their faith. An advantage that the Bible classes have is in their ability to meet in homes where they can express their opinions freely as this allows the conversations to become more personal and meaningful to the participants as compared to the abstract Biblical teachings found in most other models (Rainer, 1993:293). However, not all classes are held in homes, especially in the urban cities and towns. Some classes have been infused into the Sunday divine service for the convenience of members. The Accra Diocese 2017 Synod report on the Bible class states, “Bible classes were conducted regularly in all Societies with some classes meeting in homes during week days; after church service and in between multiple church services on Sundays.”⁹⁴ Obviously classes which are held after church service and in-between services will not be able to hold members for long since most of them would be eager to either rush back home or join the next service. That means there would not be enough time for any

⁹⁴ The MCG, Accra Diocese. 56th Annual Synod, 2017 Minutes & Agenda, Representative Session. p.24.

meaningful class session, especially sharing of experiences and accounting to each other as prescribed and practised by John Wesley.

Bible classes are good for discipling members to maturity and for church growth. Without Bible class thousands of people may flock to the church every Sunday to participate in the worship service experience, where the worship music looks and feels like any secular concert, and the pastor comes to the stage and delivers a sermon, that sounds much like any other self-help, feel-good message, and people attend the service and leave without having been truly affected one way or the other. The church may grow numerically, but the people remain spiritually stagnated, as observed in some mega churches of today by Russell (2000:176).

Ghana Methodism has attempted to stick to its heritage and tradition and so can reclaim its past glory. Bible class meetings, love feasts, watch nights, and covenant Sundays continue to be observed. However, a careful analysis of the church's data reveals a downward or at best plateau of Bible class attendance with corresponding low rate of growth of the total membership (numerical strength) of the church. The contemporary Bible class attendance and practices of the church raises the question as to whether the contemporary Bible class praxis is in consonance with the historical Wesleyan tradition or a manifestation of the influence of modernity and modern way of life that is inconsistent with eighteenth century approach to discipleship as suggested by Crisp (2015). Meanwhile Obeng Adjei (2013) and Paintsil (2008) found that among some of the Methodist churches in Ghana, the structured Bible class lessons and training of Bible class leaders hold the key to the church regaining its past glory for discipleship and membership growth.

2.2.9.1 Appointment of Class Leaders

Obeng Adjei (2013) found in one of the dioceses of Methodist church Ghana that appointment of effective and efficient class leaders is the foundational building blocks for the discipleship process. In view of that a number of the participants expect that the character of the leaders is considered before they are appointment by the Leaders Meeting. In his study, one hundred and thirty-four (134) respondents, representing eighty-eight percent (88%) were of the view that honesty, integrity and faithfulness are character traits expected of class leaders. These are important character traits that most of the respondents expect class leaders to exhibit. A person with integrity does not have divided loyalties; they are whole people who can be identified by their single-mindedness. Further, a class leader must be sincere, whose lives can be read with positivity, very loyal to God and to his church. The person is always committed to his calling. He must be truthful, faithful, reliable, dependable and honest.

Obeng Adjei reported that the roles expected of class leaders include leading Class discussions, visitation and providing pastoral care for class members. One hundred and nine (109) respondents representing seventy-one percent (71%) stated that leading class meetings and providing pastoral care are the responsibilities for class leaders. Discipleship was likened to mentorship or apprenticeship whereby the student or the learner imitates the teacher. Despite the important roles class leaders play most of them are not trained nor prepared to handle class meetings in the Diocese. The survey revealed that most of the respondents were not aware of leaders' preparatory class as a means of preparing class leaders to lead class meetings. Eighty-three (83) respondents which represent fifty-four percent (54%) were not

aware of leaders' preparatory class. This indicates that most of the class leaders are not adequately prepared to lead class meetings efficiently.

Nonetheless a discovery was that about seventy-six percent (76%) claimed that class meetings help to improve the understanding of the Bible and this helps to transform their lives since the church exists to inform and to transform members hence the word of God is taught for members to understand and apply it to their daily lives. This agrees with the Great Commission as found in Matthew 28:18-20 urging the disciples to teach the new disciples to obey all that Jesus has commanded. It was also found that class members stay far away from the meeting places which pose challenge to them. This is contrary to the early Class Meetings held in Bristol and other parts of England where the Methodist Church began. Henderson (1997) suggested that since the Class Meetings were held regularly once a week, it was important to meet at a place that was easily accessible by all the members. For him the familiarity of a local surrounding must have added a sense of warmth and community to the meeting. Wherever the Class met, the primary consideration was the convenience of the members. This kept the travel time to a minimum, and allowed the members to participate fully in the activities of the group⁹⁵.

2.2.9.2 Attendance to Class Meetings

Obeng-Adjei discovered once again that weekly Class Meetings are held in all Societies in the Diocese. Class members are expected to participate in the activities of the Class and also recognized Bible Class attendance as mandatory. However, not all who attend the church

⁹⁵ Henderson, *A Model For Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meetings*. 1997, p.99

services belong to Classes. There was also poor attendance to Class Meetings especially the young members of the Church in the Diocese but no disciplinary action taken against non-attendance to Class Meetings which is contrary to Wesley's rules where expulsion could be one of the ways of exercising discipline for failure to attend class meetings. Henderson, points out that Wesley or an assistant would visit each class and determine the spiritual state of the members. He issues tickets to those found to attend class meetings regularly and had reputation of being serious about their religious lives. If one was found not to be living up to the rules of the Society or had missed several class meetings without a valid excuse, he would not receive a ticket⁹⁶. This served as an extrinsic motivation for members to attend regular class meetings. The survey indicates that class meetings are no longer mandatory as used to be the case during the time of Wesley. However, the members used the *Weekly Bible Lessons* to facilitate teaching and learning in class meetings.

There must be an emphasis placed on training of the class leaders. Leaders are charged to be an example to others. As stated in Hebrews 13.7, "*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*" As Wesley realized that it is not just solitary discipline but social as well. This social accountability principle has been woven into the church's history and must be intertwined into its class system. Leaders are supposed to be living examples of what it means to live a holy life. St. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the gospel, if necessary, use words." The actions and lives of Christian leaders will testify whether or not they are true disciples of Jesus Christ or as John Wesley would say, "The Almost Christian." The charge that today's church leaders have is found in 1 Corinthians 11.1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

⁹⁶ Henderson, *A Model For Making Disciples: John Wesley's Class Meetings*, 1997, p.108

In doing this we will create the transformation that is required to change lives and change the world.

Moore (2012:205), accounting for some of the reasons for small group failures said, some of them are “too programmy and not relational enough.” This means that the small group suffers stagnation or even failure from lack of relationships. Clinton and Hawkins (2011:147) have said that relationships can shape a crucible for spiritual transformation. Here the authors allude to discipleship as the goal of Christian relationships. It is one that has the goal of helping people grow in their commitment to Christ and His church. In other words, discipleship is at the centre of Christian relationships. It is said, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ” (Camp 2008:19). In the Methodist Church Ghana, the class meeting has been provided as the basic structure through which discipleship of members takes place. Unfortunately, though a lot of evangelistic work is done, evidence on the ground suggests that the discipleship aspect of helping members grow spiritually is negligible, especially with little attention being paid to the class meetings. At the class meeting, the leader has the opportunity to meet with his/her members, interact with them, and monitor their spiritual growth. The bad result of separating evangelism from discipleship and prioritizing the first is shallowness, immaturity and vulnerability to false teaching, church growth without depth and rapid withering away (Wright, 2010:285).

Sharing real life and the Word of God with the disciples intentionally is a factor that underpins relational discipleship. Relational discipleship is about journeying with people and allowing the Word of God to be the guiding force in the relationship (Virgil Grant, 2012).

Clinton and Hawkins (2011:146) have again said that in our relational framework, we view development as unfolding through a dialectical process of attachment and differentiation, and that humans have a need to connect within the safety of trusted relationships that provide a holding environment for the anxiety of growth.

Relational discipleship can be said to follow the pattern of Jesus' life and ministry, and this manifested itself clearly in the small group around Him. Earley and Gutierrez (2010) have said that, involvement in small group life was a primary spiritual discipline in Jesus' life. That Jesus utilized the small group for His ministry makes it a recommended practice for developing and building up the believers for ministry. In the view of Rick Warren (1995:324), relevant preaching creates attendees and members but small groups retain members and foster discipleship. Rainer (2001:118) shares this view. According to him, church membership retention is heavily impacted by relationships, especially small group relationships. He goes on to state that new members who join the small group are five times more likely to remain in the same church five years after joining.

Leadership of the church has direct responsibility towards the church's discipleship function. Evans (2006:294) has said that the church is not just a preaching station but also a place where God's leaders oversee the process of discipleship so that His Word and His blessings may flow out to the congregation at large. The process of overseeing which include the activity of controlling and managing implies direct involvement or interest in the activity being pursued. Indeed, Evans (2006:295) states that the Word of God calls a church congregation a flock, and the leaders are to be its shepherds. This indicates that a shepherd

has direct relationship with the flock under his care and shows keen interest in their development and nurture. This calls for very close connectedness between the pastor as a shepherd, and his flock. By this, he is able to influence the growth of the flock, not only by his preaching but also with his lifestyle. In the opinion of Servant (2010:29), a pastor or leader makes another wrong assumption if he thinks that his teaching responsibility is primarily one of delivering weekly public preaching. Relational discipleship as the pastor and leader's strategic function is thus envisaged outside the chapel as well. However, Malphurs (2011:52) seems to have a different opinion about the pastor's role. He expresses concern that a large number of members see the role of the pastor as that of a chaplain who is there to take care of them and that these people, and often their families, establish their expectations of the pastor on this assumption. This concern seems misplaced because caring for the members is a practical function of the pastor and is in line with Jesus' charge to Peter and indeed all His chosen leaders of His flock, "Feed my lambs" Shepherd my sheep Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17 NET). Thus, the leaders have the delegated role of feeding the sheep; and the members also have similar role of feeding the sheep since a disciple is also the make disciples. And as Methodists we believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2: 5-9).

2.3 RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Pentecost (1971:14) states that discipleship goes beyond salvation and that a person's salvation does not necessarily make him/her a disciple. He states, "Not all men who are saved are disciples although all who are disciples are saved." In this statement, Pentecost (1971:14) shows that discipleship focuses more on a person's spiritual growth and development as a sequel to his or her salvation such that he/she would be guided into an intimate relationship

with the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, it is only when people have been brought into such relationship with Christ Jesus that they can be His effective witnesses. Therefore, Pentecost underscores the point that in discussing the question of discipleship, one is not dealing with just a person's salvation but also with his relationship with Jesus as his Teacher, Master and Lord. The practicability of this process lies in the commitment of the pastor and church leadership in ensuring that they maintain passionate involvement in the discipleship of church members such that they will grow to have deeper relationship with Christ. Thus, following after the pattern of Jesus Christ, church leadership would do well to establish personal and closer relationship with their members with the view to helping them grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship is about a relationship enabled and empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit who transforms a person into the image of Christ (Glerup, 2010: 251). Relational discipleship aims at creating an environment which promotes loving relationships among the gathered community and which offers them opportunities to learn from each other. In this regard, the pastor and church leadership have a major role to play in creating such environment. It is a condition, which allows the members to help and encourage each other in the use of their spiritual gifts. As they do so, they grow into spiritual maturity and that enables them to show more commitment to Christ and the church.

In the opinion of Horton (2006:598), the pastor and church leadership as spiritual directors should strive for closer relationship with their members in order to provide worthy examples for them to emulate. According to him, if indeed a spiritual leader truly wants others to learn,

and if he is to inspire them, he needs to demonstrate worthwhile truths in his own life. The fact is nothing leads as well as example. Values and behavioural norms are simply not transmitted easily by talk or memo, but are conveyed very effectively by doing and doing visibly. This may be suggestive of a one-on-one interaction with the members. Obviously, sometimes it becomes difficult for a pastor to attend to members on a one-on-one basis because of the numbers. In the opinion of Malphurs (2009:70), this may even not be the most effective way to reach out to more people. According to him, there is not much evidence in scriptures that Jesus spent a lot of time in any one-on-one relationships. He states, there are several ways that our churches could effectively minister to their people one-on-one, for instance by providing mature believers as counsellors or mentors who at the very least help new believers and members. The bottom line is that it is possible for the pastor to build a team of leaders for the pastoral care of the members, and for such members to experience fruitful relationship with the collective leadership of the church. The emphasis here is that relationships must be well established even when attending to the members in small groups for achieving growth.

Moore (2012:45) sees discipleship as one, which not only portrays the nature and character of the Godhead, but also involves the active participation of the Trinity. He states, “Discipling includes a relational kind of faith – one involving the person of the Holy Spirit as well as the Father and Son.” The connectedness that exists between the leader and the members is such that the latter will always look up to the former for spiritual interventions. Pointing to the relational nature of the human being, McGrath (2012:116) has said, “We have been created to exist in relationship.” The statement is a pointer to the inherent nature of the human being to

feel a sense of belonging. The pastor and church leadership cannot ignore this very important tool to foster healthy church life.

According to Rost (1991:111), leadership is a “communal relationship” or a community of believers. Rost saw the relationship between leaders and their followers [members] as an influencing factor on the life of the organization. To him the leader and his followers develop a relationship wherein they influence one another as well as the organization and society (1991: 108). Rost showed how relationships in the class can foster membership commitment and involvement. In the opinion of Albrecht and Bahr (1983:366), people who leave a church do so either to join another church, or to stop formal religious involvement. But this opinion as offered by Albrecht and Bahr does not seem to address the root cause of people leaving a church. People will leave to join another church or stop formal religious involvement when there is an underlying cause, the lack of relationship or sense of belonging, may compel a person leave and join another church or stop formal religious involvement.

Dawson (2006:174) describes relational discipleship as real people sharing real stories about real life with biblical truth and intentionality.... First, it is about people being transparent with one another. Second, relational discipleship is about being intentional in conversation and intentional about weaving the Word of God into the conversation. Largely, there is an inherent need within humans for connectedness for mutual growth benefits. Thus, when pastors and church leadership create and develop such relationships, they become intentional in relational discipleship. Indeed, when we go and build relationships, we have actually begun to go and make disciples (Dawson, 2006:174).

Macintosh and Arn, (n.d.) have said, “Seeing people come in the ‘front door’ is one thing; keeping them from leaving out the back door is another. Macintosh and Arn indicated that new members who stay beyond their first year make an average of seven new friends in the church; this compares with making only two friends among the dropouts. He suggested that if people have friends in the church they will stay, if they do not, they leave. Thus, when people establish relationships in a church, they are most likely to find motivation to stay and thereby become available for discipling. On the other hand, Asamoah-Gyadu (2009:232-3) reported that his examination of the perspective of the membership of their association with a church revealed a basic fear of malevolent forces, a dependence on the pastor’s anointing and a belief that the protection and blessing of God will remain upon them so long as they remain faithful, made them stay in a particular church. He noted that besides the members’ expectation of God’s protection and blessing, they depend also on the anointing of the pastor. With such mind-set, it is not surprising when he reports that church members are inclined toward closer relationship with their pastors, rather than God in some instances. As Gyekye (2003:26), rightly states that in African societies, human relations are highly valued. This means that members of the church would cherish it if their pastors were showing interest in their affairs and opening up to them.

2.3.1 Relational Discipleships in Small Group Meeting

Small group enhance relational discipleship. The involvement in small group life was a primary spiritual discipline in Jesus’ life

Osei-Bonsu and Dei (2015: 117) equated mentorship with relational discipleship in small groups. Citing the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Osei-Bonsu and Dei wrote, “A mentor is an experienced person who advises and helps somebody with less experience over a period of time. A protégé on the other hand is defined as one who is protected or trained or whose career is furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence” (2015: 117). Osei-Bonsu and Dei continue, “In pastoral ministry, the mentor-protégé relationship would seem to suggest a helping relationship between a seasoned minister and a less experienced minister in which the seasoned minister works in a positive and constructive manner to train, influence, advise, and protect the less experienced minister in all facets of pastoral life” (2015:117). They asserted that the same is true of the mentoring relationship between class leaders and their members. In class meeting, the leader being an experienced and matured Christian, utilizes the mentor-protégé relationship to help his/her members to be well grounded in the faith.

Nsengimana (2014) in a research on the use of small groups to increase church growth in the Gikondo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, found that a small group ministry is the best tool for reaching the people of Rwanda and especially of the Gikondo Church in Kigali. Nsengimana affirms that several theological approaches are crucial to the issues of church growth, particularly concerning small groups. He studied the Methodist Class System and the historical background of the Gikondo Church and its ministries in order to help in the contextualization of the message and found that among the small groups the Methodism class meeting provides a place where people can worship together, fellowship, pray, witness, support each other, offer encouragement, and break bread together. A small group is a place

where we can freely love our neighbour. The small group also provides encouragement and a place of rest where the group can recharge and share how God is working through His servants. He found that the Methodist class meeting has a biblical foundation for the scriptural mandate for growth by examining three major aspects of growth: general growth principles as developed in small groups, organizational growth through small group leadership development, and spiritual growth via discipleship in small groups.

Deborah M. Gill (2007) a professor of New Testament Exposition, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in USA, came up with the following core values of discipleship. That the discipleship must be Preeminent and Transformational. In *Pre-eminent*, the disciple-maker equips Christ-followers to give first-place in their lives to Christ, his Kingdom, and his causes; and in *Transformational*, the disciple maker equips the disciple with biblical strategies for change. It should also be *Intentional*; that the disciple-maker trains the disciple to live life on purpose, from the inside out, strategically, missionally, purposefully and clearly comprehending God's commands and commission for all people; and discovering in their own design, God's unique destiny for their individual life. The other values are *Transformational and Holistic*. In *Transformational* disciple-making the follower prepared for an intimate relationship with Jesus, for healthy relationships with other Christ-followers, and for authentic relationship with those who do not follow Christ. While *Holistic* disciple making equips the followers for discipleship that affects their whole life, that every component is Christ-Centred and Spirit-Infused. The final core value is *Life-Long*: Disciple-making that also prepares the followers for a process of discipleship that is life-long and not just a one-time event or experience or a short-term interaction.

2.4 LEADERSHIP STYLES AND DISCIPLESHIP

The above literature suggests leadership discipleship styles have implications for retention of church members, particularly, among the youth and church growth. Commenting on the influence of the pastor and church leadership on the spiritual outlook of the church, Michael (2010:70) wrote, “Spiritual stagnation in a minister, results in spiritual lethargy in the local church.” In other words, the condition in the local church is a reflection of the condition of the pastor and leadership. According to Michael (2010:69), “A leader will not lead others farther than he has gone himself. Perhaps this is why we see so many spiritually stagnated churches.” Therefore, if there is lack of relationships in the church, the leadership cannot escape blame.

Leadership is defined as a social influence process in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach organizational goals⁹⁷. Great leaders can inspire religious and political movements and social change as they can motivate others to perform, create, and innovate. Leadership styles are classifications of how a person behaves while leading a group. A person’s leadership style refers to the one’s characteristic behaviours when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Researchers have developed different theories and frameworks that allow us to better identify and understand these different leadership styles and how they influence behaviours. The early study of Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) was very influential and established three major leadership styles that have provided a springboard for more defined leadership theories. These are the authoritarian, democratic and the laissez-faire leadership styles.

⁹⁷ W. Callarman. *Cornerstone Course, 3rd edition*, New York: McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing, 2000, p.118

2.4.1 Authoritarian Leadership (Autocratic)

The Authoritarian leaders, also known as autocratic leaders, provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both commands by the leader and control of the followers. There is a clear division between the leader and the members. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently, with little or no input from the rest of the group. Lewin et al found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group. The autocratic approach can be a good one when the situation calls for rapid decisions and decisive actions. However, it tends to create dysfunctional and even hostile environments, often pitting followers against the domineering leader. They concluded that it is harder to move from an authoritarian style to a democratic style than vice versa. Abuse of this method is usually viewed as controlling, bossy, and dictatorial. Authoritative leaders tend to be **Confrontational** in the style of leading (Choi, Goh, Adam & Tan, 2016). A person who exhibit this discipleship style tend to be confident, bold, assertive and direct and may not like small talk but like to get right to the point; have strong opinions and convictions. They also tend to be confrontational with truth as well (Choi, et. al, 2016).

2.4.2 Democratic (Participative Leadership)

Lewin et al. found that democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, is typically the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members.

Persons who work under a democratic leader may be less productive than the members of the authoritarian group, however, their contributions may be of a higher quality (Choi, et. al, 2016)). Democratic leaders encourage group members to participate, but retain the final say in the decision-making process. They make tend to be the most effective at inspiring followers to perform well and so their followers feel like they are an important part of the team, which helps foster commitment to the goals of the group. Persons under such leader feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative.

2.4.3 Delegative Leadership (Laissez-Faire)

Lewin found that persons under delegative leadership, also known as laissez-faire leadership, were the least productive of all three groups. They also made more demands on the leader, showed little cooperation and were unable to work independently. Lewin et al noted that laissez-faire leadership tended to result in groups that lacked direction and members who blamed each other for mistakes, refused to accept personal responsibility, made less progress, and produced less work. This is because Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave the decision-making up to group members. While this style can be useful in situations involving highly qualified experts, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

In their book, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, Bass and Bass (2008) indicated that democratic leadership tends to be centered on the followers and is an effective approach when trying to maintain relationships with others. People who work under such leaders tend to get along well, support one another, and consult other members of the group when making decisions. Bass and Bass also reported that

authoritarian leadership is often presented solely in negative, often disapproving, terms.

Authoritarian leaders are often described as controlling and close-minded, yet this overlooks the potential positives of stressing rules, expecting obedience and taking responsibility. While authoritarian leadership certainly is not the best choice for every situation, it can be effective and beneficial in cases where followers need a great deal of direction and where rules and standards must be followed to the letter. Another often overlooked benefit of the authoritarian style is the ability to maintain a sense of order.

In addition to the three styles of leadership identified by Lewin and his colleagues, Christian researchers in particular have described numerous other characteristic patterns of leadership. A few of the best-known include:

2.4.4 Transactional Leadership (Hersey and Blanchard (1969))

Leaders using the transactional leadership style receive certain tasks to perform and provide rewards or punishments to team members based on performance results. Leader and team members set predetermined goals together and members agree to follow the direction and leadership of the Leader to accomplish those goals. Members receive rewards when they accomplish goals (Adeyemo, 2006). Hersey and Blanchard (1969) reported that the transactional leadership style views the leader-follower relationship as a transaction. By accepting a position as a member of the group, the individual has agreed to obey the leader. In most situations, this involves the employer-employee relationship, and the transaction focuses on the follower completing required tasks in exchange for monetary compensation. transactional leaders tend to employ **Intellectual style** in their discussions (Adeyemo, 2006).

These people are inquisitive, analytical and logical and like to debate. They are proactive, autonomous and champion ideas and thoughts on how others or the world could be improved. They tend to set long term goals as well as develop complex systems. They also tend to ask questions which may be mistaken to be argumentative (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

Blanchard, Zigarmi and Zigarmi (2013) maintains that one of the main advantages of this leadership style is that it creates clearly defined roles. Members know what they are required to do and what they will be receiving in exchange. Group members may also be motivated to perform well to receive rewards. This style allows leaders to offer a great deal of supervision and direction, if needed. The main disadvantage with transactional styles is that the style tends to stifle creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. King Saul is perceived to have Transactional leadership style (Hawkins & Parrott, 2013).

2.4.5 Transformational Leadership

MacGregor Burns and Bernard and Ruth Bass (2008) defined transformational leadership as consisting primarily of a leader who inspires commitment to a distinct organizational vision and cause as well as a leader who guides and transforms the organization to their central mission. Transformational leadership is often identified as the single most effective style. This style was first described during the late 1970s and later expanded upon by researcher Bernard M. Bass. Transformational leaders are able to motivate and inspire followers and to direct positive changes in groups. These leaders are described to be emotionally intelligent, energetic and passionate. Aside being committed to helping the organization achieve its goals they also to help group members fulfill their potential.

Hussain, Abbas, Lei, Haider and Akram (2017) demonstrated that this style of leadership results in higher performance and more improved group satisfaction than other leadership styles. These leaders usually have good and effective **Interpersonal relationship style**. These people are warm, compassionate, sensitive, conversational and friendship-oriented, tending to focus on people and their needs more than on ideas. They focus on people and their needs and want to “become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” One study also found that transformational leadership led to improved well-being among group members (Hussain, et al 2017). Transformational leaders tend to be eclectic in the approach to leadership. They may use **Testimonial** and be hospitable (**Invitational style**) as well members (Hussain, et al 2017). They are also able to relate their experience well to others. However, they are vulnerable about personal life and its vicissitudes. They are overwhelmed by the account of how God reached them. See links between their own experience and that of other people.

Young-Gi Hong (2004:101-113) found that transformational leadership is key to church growth in non-western world. Stetzer and Rainer (2010) confirm the transformational approach as one of the best for church growth; they stressed the importance of disciple making for all through active biblical engagement and prayerful dependence on God alongside of ever-increasing, intentional participation in mission and ministry activities. As the church engages these issues, they will see the change: more people following Christ, more believers growing in their faith, and more churches making an impact on their communities. Leighton Ford (1991) presented Jesus Christ as the most transforming leader in his book

Transforming Leadership: Jesus' way of creating vision, shaping values and empowering change.

2.4.6 Servant Leadership model/ Serving style (Peter G. Northouse, 2016)

Northouse explains in the Servant Leadership model, the success of Servant Leadership is influenced by pre-existing conditions, such as work atmosphere, societal rules, the personality traits and moral standing of the leader, and whether the followers in this situation want a servant leader. They are others-centred, humble, and patient, see needs and find joy in meeting them. They show love through action more than words and attach value to even menial tasks. They see needs and find joy in providing for those needs. They are often less vocal. Northouse (2016) describes servant leadership as the leader putting the follower and the followers needs before their own. These leaders quietly nurture and support followers as they shift authority to them, which fosters follower confidence and personal development (Northouse, 2016). Servant Leadership can only succeed if the leader can convince followers that their concerns are important and they want them to excel, to support them emotionally, garner their trust, and guide them (Northouse, 2016). That servant leaders can think abstractly, will always be honest and fair, will encourage freethinking, and will contribute to the community (Northouse, 2106). When successful, the results of servant leadership are that followers will grow and excel, increasing their confidence and their team production (Northouse, 2016). Followers will then begin to treat others better and ultimately society will benefit (Northouse, 2016). Northouse gave examples with vocations whose focus is on serving others as individuals who were good servant leaders: a nursing supervisor who understands the mission of the hospital as well as the daily needs, a hospice priest who grasps

that patients just want someone to listen to them, a professor who puts students' success ahead of her own, a teacher who provides unbiased guidance to students, and a teacher who empowers his teacher's assistants by encouraging them to be independent (Northouse, 2016).

Leadership styles have been implicated in studies of declining churches and groups. A number of longitudinal studies reports of decline of church membership especially among young adults. In *A Review of Literature of Church Leadership and Congregational Growth*, Dagogo, Oghenero and Akintokunbo (2018) examined church leadership styles as a tool for church growth and reported a strong correlation between Church Leadership and fluidity of congregation members. Roger Dudley (2000:35) noted that, "It seems reasonable to believe that at least forty (40) to fifty (50) percent of Seventh-day Adventist teenagers in North America are essentially leaving the church by their middle 20s." This young adult exodus is not exclusive to Adventism. According to Wuthnow (2007:18), "Protestant churches lost between a quarter and a third of their membership between the 1960s and the 1980s." Dudley (2000:22) suggested, "The decline in membership of many mainline Protestant churches has been shown to be largely traceable to the shortage of young adults in their congregations." Barna (2006:6), also reported that the majority of today's young adults (61%) had been churched at one time during their teen years but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying).

Kinnaman and Lyons (2007:8) asserted that, the current state of ministry to young people is woefully inadequate to addressing the spiritual needs of millions of young adults. These individuals are making significant life choices and determining the patterns and preferences of

their spiritual reality while churches wait, generally in vain, for them to return after college or when the kids come (Kinnaman & Lyons, 2007:8). To offset this trend, it has been concluded that pastors' positive influence and impact on the climate of churches is needed to set the culture of young adults and to include it in the pastor's vision and leadership (Martin, 2009:46-53).

Bossert (2007:27) described how his dying church recognizing their fate and took heroic steps to turn the tide by careful self-analysis, practical research, and courageous yet inclusive change steps. They managed to reverse the attrition tide, resulting in a 60 percent increase of young adults in their church. Leaders/Teachers of small groups were found to have profound influence in the lives of young adults. These teachers were called upon to invest in young adults' spiritual development by establishing faith fellowships and discipleship communities and mentoring as key to involving young adults and those who felt disenfranchised.

Paulsen (2006), in support of the idea, asserted that in order to be effective in looking after the united church and keeping it strong in mission, it is critical that the men and women who are young today be invited to sit next to leaders and pastors; that they be invited to think and plan with themselves, and that they are listened to, as values are defined and the mission agenda examined (2006:17). Paulsen maintained that it was not only the endorsement of high-level leaders, but also their conspicuous actions that will serve as a leadership catalyst to transform young adult attrition statistics into retention trends. The peers are effective young adults, who have not only remained in the church but are faith activists wherever they are (Maran, Karimabadi, & Bourne, 2006). The peers are among the most influential and powerful—not

only in taking heroic action with their peers but also in rejuvenating them, fostering a movement that will draw new generations (Maran, Karimabadi, & Bourne, 2006). Thus, young members are just as essential in the embrace and encouragement of their peers. The church as a whole, and specifically parents, pastors, professors, and presidents, must build restorative relationships with young adults.

A number of researchers have also suggested relational approach of discipleship for church growth. Wan and Nguyen, (2004) using the relational approach by Paul and Timothy, made a strong case for the use of that approach to win people to the church. Wan and Nguyen defined relationship as the dynamic and interactive connection between personal beings or between God, the Ultimate Being and human beings. Relationship as a living organism can get worse or better. Therefore, relationship nurturing must be recognized and dealt with.

However, the churches with the highest numbers of church friends per attendee are either stable or declining. Newcomers find such churches “cliquish” because high-tenure members have as many friends as they want or can manage. The ability of church friendship networks to incorporate newcomers appears to decline as average tenure and number of church friends increase. In contrast, attendees of the two growing churches have lower attendance tenure, fewer church friends, and greater desire for additional church friends. They are thus more inclined to incorporate newcomers, which further facilitates their growth. Martin (2009:46-53) came out with four relational building blocks for effective leadership in reaching out to others, particularly to the younger generation. These are discussed in the next section.

2.5 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY ON DISCIPLESHIP AND CHURCH GROWTH

Relational discipleship offered by Wesley's class meeting and Methodism in general is said to follow the pattern of Jesus' life and his ministry that manifested itself clearly in the small group around Him. Therefore, the John Wesley's class meeting offers the best example of practical theological framework that addresses the four (4) arguments of practical theology.

The arguments are:

1. The Biblical or theological argument
2. The teaching and learning theory argument
3. The practical argument for relational discipleship
4. Influential leadership theory argument

This section highlights the four main theoretical arguments that influence the pastors and church leader's relational involvement in the small group exudes.

2.5.1 The Biblical or Theological Argument

The Biblical and theological basis for this study is derived from Jesus' Great Commission given to His followers to make disciples of all nations (people groups) as contained in Matthew 28:18-20. Found in this commissioning, is the injunction to teach the converts to obey all His teachings. The small group or class meeting serves as an important channel for carrying out this aspect of the commission. This was exemplified in the life and ministry of Christ. He would often withdraw with His disciples from the masses to an isolated location where he would expound and explain issues to them. While Jesus did not ignore the multitudes, He focused His attention on training the twelve. The use of the small group

environment by Jesus to teach, grow, and develop His disciples, is a typical example for pastors and church leaders who are interested in the development and growth of their members. According to Clinton and Hawkins (2011:146) in the relational framework, we view development as unfolding through a dialectical process of attachment and differentiation and that humans have a need to connect within the safety of trusted relationships.

2.5.2 The Teaching and Learning Theory Argument

The theory of teaching and learning looks at the process of enriching behaviour through impartation and absorption of knowledge. Learning has been defined as a change in behaviour. In other words, learning is approached as an outcome – the product of some process. The process here is not only about instructing a learner but also teaching by example as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian Church sought to draw the attention of the members to the lessons that they could learn from his exemplary lifestyle. The pastor and leader’s relational involvement in the affairs of the members is an opportunity to leave for the latter, a lifestyle example to follow. Horton (2006:598) argues, “If a spiritual leader wants others to learn, and if he is to inspire them, he needs to demonstrate worthwhile truths in his own life... Values and behavioural norms are simply not transmitted easily by talk or memo, but are conveyed very effectively by doing and doing visibly.”

2.5.3 The Practical Argument for Relational Discipleship

The Practical Argument for Relational Discipleship maintains that relational discipleship is at the core of pastoral ministry. Discipleship itself implies a relationship between the parties

involved in the discipleship process. According to Wright (2000:31), it is a relationship of influence, in which the leader seeks to influence the behaviour, attitudes, vision, or beliefs of another. This relationship is built within the broad context of pastoral care. Michael (2010:155) quotes Spurgeon, an expert on leadership and management theories as having said, “The Christian leader who ministers effectively to his followers understands that pastoral care has to be a priority. It is really about nurturing relationships.” Spurgeon goes on to proffer a clue to the caring pastor. He states, “The pastor must make a priority to be out among the people to whom God has called him to serve” (Michael, 2010:156). The underlying principle here is that by nurturing closer relationships with his members, the pastor has the opportunity to provide good pastoral care and thereby assist them to grow.

2.5.4 Influential Leadership Theory Argument

The theory of influential leadership holds that leaders do influence the behaviour of the persons over whom they exercise leadership. According to Northouse (2007:69), most Style theories of leadership focus on the behaviour of the leader, especially on two major behaviours, namely, task behaviour and relationship behaviour. The task behaviour focuses on leaders who help others to fulfil accomplishments and objectives. On the other hand, relationship behaviour looks at leaders who build strong interpersonal relationships, and help others to feel comfortable with themselves, work or group environment, as well as fellow workers or members. Northouse (2007:69) maintains that the central purpose of the style approach is to explain how leaders combine these two kinds of behaviours to influence subordinates in their efforts to reach a goal. Thus, how the pastor or leader combine these behaviours (task and interpersonal relationship styles) to influence the spiritual growth and

development of members. This style theory focuses more on the leaders (including pastor) more than the group members. Wright (2000:29) asserts that many writers of leadership literature are committed Christians who support a relational approach to leadership because of its recognizable grounding in biblical values, and that the model has emerged primarily because it works. Pastoral leadership is thus placed in a position to influence behavioural change among members of the church. However, this can only happen when the pastor takes advantage of this privilege by getting involved in the small group/class meeting where he can foster closer relationship with the members. Yukl (1981:3) in his definition of leadership states that it is “the influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by the leader over followers”. ‘Intentional,’ means that the leader must have an aim in the exercise of leadership. For example, the pastor’s aim may be to influence the spiritual maturity of his members by applying various leadership tools at his disposal such as teaching, mentoring, and modelling. In the opinion of Hersey and Blanchard (1988:5), “Leadership occurs any time one attempts to influence the behaviour of an individual or group, regardless of the reason.”

As described above leadership and leadership styles are very important in discipleship.

Various leadership styles some of which have been described have been applied by Christian leaders, which have had varying degrees of success. However, Myles Munroe (2014: 31) in his book “the power of character in leadership” have added that the character of the leader is as important as the leadership style. He defined character as a complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, group or nation, p. 31

Stadelman (1998:219) complains that practical theology seems to be turning into pragmatic theology especially under American pragmatism, and is characterized more by the principle of “what works” while its theories and models are centred more in the social sciences and losing its historic theological origins. On the other hand, he also indicates his concern that his own European tradition stays comfortably in the theoretical field and is not pragmatic enough. Stadelman (1998: 220,221) argues that all theology is eminently practical and must be practical if it is to be true theology. Stadelman (1998:222) provides an apt definition of practical theology as “theological theory of church practice.” Without losing sight of other definitions, this definition is well at home with this study as it focuses on actions that occur within the context of the church. Pieterse (1990:223) also defines practical theology as, “the critical theory of gospel-oriented communicative acts” which aims at “bringing about and maintaining a reciprocal relationship between God and human beings through the ministry.” Indeed, practical theology is the theology of the relational transactions of the Kingdom and Church of God in individual, group or corporate contexts.

According to Rev. Dr. Marty Cauley (2014), we live disconnected lives where we barely know the neighbours who live just next door. We exchange pleasant waves pulling in and out of the neighbourhood but I have never shared a meal with them or sat late in the evening and talked about significant things. As an advocate for real connection, we should be aware of that same need in our own lives. To Cauley we are surrounded by more people and living in closer proximity than any time in history. However, we are almost entirely without connection. Even though the most introverted around us craves some level of connection, we have withdrawn into our corners and cubicles, often settling for Facebook friends rather than real relationships.

We make tenuous ties that can be snapped and “unfriended” with a few simple clicks. It is time for us to reconnect with our roots and the people around us who need to be invited into communion with Christ.

However, we should know that discipleship is based on relationship and should be relational. The Bible Class of Methodism offers just that. Class meetings were the foundation of relational discipleship for John Wesley, Methodism’s founder⁹⁸. They were originally led by hand-picked leaders Wesley had personally discipled. This empowering of lay leadership allowed for relational discipleship to extend to every member of the society. Class leaders visited homes, offered instruction, encouragement, pastoral care, and spiritual discipline as needed. Class meetings provided pastoral care for every member of the society and those seeking to become part of the Methodist movement. Class meetings included spirited biblical instruction and acted as a catalyst for missional action as the members were “spurred on to perfection.” Additionally, class leaders provided personal mentorship related to families, financial instruction, and addressed lifestyle issues. By visiting house to house, class leaders were able to observe the family dynamic of each member of their class.

In comparison to other revival movements of the day, the Methodists were able to spread faster and last longer in large part due to the relational nature of class meeting discipleship. In most revival movements, the movement only lasts as long as the emotionally-charged spiritual response continues. With class meetings, Wesley was able to provide ongoing spiritual nurture and accountability to accompany the movement’s powerful preaching. Lastly, the

⁹⁸ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodist*

empowering of lay leadership, a hallmark of Methodism, began to take root. Almost all class leaders were laity, disciplined by trained clergy and lay pastors. This decentralization of authority allowed for greater reach into communities previously ignored by the parish church. By creating lay Methodist missionaries going into every corner of the city and involved in commerce, factory work, and local government, the movement penetrated the heart of the community. New Faith Communities seeks to recover the practice of relational discipleship practiced by Wesley and his early followers and help people reconnect with God and each other. As a core practice, relational discipleship provides for care, saturates our lives with scripture and prayer, and encourages practices of worship and mission. Most importantly, it allows everyone to fully participate in the act of disciple-making.

The importance of the class system in ensuring relational discipleship particularly through small groups, effective leadership styles as modelled by Jesus Christ is intricately woven throughout the Ghana Methodist heritage. This study explored the class system as applied in Ghana to determine whether or not there is the need to revive the class system and to help correct the mistakes.

CHAPTER THREE: FIELD SURVEY: VALIDATING THE ASSUMPTIONS

3.1 Research Design and Methodology.

This section explains the design, research approach, data collection and analysis.

In the opinion of Leedy and Ormrod (2001:94), “Research is a viable approach to a problem only when there are data to support it.” According to Phelps, Fisher and Ellis (2007), “Collecting data lies at the heart of the research process.”

3.2 Study Population

Accra population is 2,475, 000 million (2018) 2,439,000 – 2017 225.67km² growth immigration was 35% of the population growth. The Accra diocese is located in that capital city of the county implies that an attempt to cover such a not so wide geographical area but the population density and heavy vehicular traffic made it a bit challenging to get people to respond to the questionnaires posed a challenge for the researcher. This research into the Methodist class meeting would have been ideal for the entire Connexion⁹⁹ of the Methodist Church Ghana, but due to time and financial constraints, the researcher limited himself to one Diocese out of sixteen (16)¹⁰⁰. The selected Diocese is the Accra Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana; of which the researcher belongs. Although, the scope of study comprises one out of the nineteen (19) dioceses, Accra Diocese is the highest number of full members who are adults (66,575) and the second highest total membership of 101,319 (Junior members = 31251) which represents about seven percent (12.25%) of the total members of the Methodist Church Ghana. In 2017 the total number of full members in Accra Diocese was 70,068, and the total Christian community was 101, 040. National total membership was 827,353 in 2017

⁹⁹ Connexion is a representative word for the entire Methodist Church Ghana. The National Body of the church.

¹⁰⁰ The Methodist Church Ghana, 10th Biennial/48th Conference Agenda, Rep. Session, Sekondi, MCG Accra 2018.

and in 2016 the total membership was 790,006. The sample selected would make a fair representation enough for a fair generalization to be arrived at.

The Accra Diocese made up of twenty-nine Circuits¹⁰¹. The surveys were conducted in five congregations to ascertain the validity of the assumptions made in the preceding chapter. The aim was to test the following hypotheses as they pertain to church growth arising out of relational discipleship:

- a) The extent to which pastors and church leaders directly get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth will determine the level of church members' interest in activities and commitment to the church.
- b) Pastors who utilize the Bible class or small group to build relationships with their members will have greater numbers of members attending small group meetings.
- c) Leadership's discipleship styles will be associated with the growth of members in terms of their number, spirituality and commitment.

3.3 Research Design

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:94), the design of a study can be thought of as a blueprint detailing what will be done and how this will be accomplished. Kothari (2004) describes research design as “an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in

¹⁰¹ A Circuit of Methodist Church Ghana, consists of one or more Societies under the pastoral care of one or more Ministers. It is a distinct authoritative unit with a Diocese in which usually several Societies conveniently situated for the purpose, are banded together for pastoral oversight, mutual support and Christian service. A Society is a local organization that meets as congregation for public worship.

procedure. He indicated further, that the research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data.

This study was in two phases and combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the involvement of pastors and lay leaders in the Bible Class meeting and to ascertain how such relational involvement influences or promotes church growth. The first phase was the qualitative phase employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore the participants experiences and perspectives on the pastor and leaders' involvement in the Bible Class meeting as well as the use of small group meeting to disciple church members. The second phase employed structured questionnaire to verify the findings from the interviews. The design was chosen to meet the objectives of the study, namely to determine the extent to which the pastor's relationship and involvement in the class or small group meetings is desired by members of the church. It is also to ascertain the extent to which the pastor's relational involvement in the class or small group meeting influences church growth.

3.4 Phase 1: Qualitative Research

The first phase was an exploratory research that employed a qualitative approach, which involved twenty (20) face to face in-depth interviews and eight (8) focus group discussions and to explore the topics of interest. The reason for employing the in-depth interviews and focus group was to explore the influence that the pastor and lay leaders' relational involvement in the small group meetings has on church growth. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research captures the features and the significance of human experiences as

identified and described by participants and interpreted by the researcher at various conceptual levels. Burns and Grove (2003:313) have defined exploratory research as research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas and/or increase knowledge of a phenomenon. Researchers therefore, use the qualitative approach to ascertain the behaviour, perspectives, experiences and feelings of people and emphasize the understanding of these elements. According to Burns and Grove (2003:19) qualitative approach is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:30) also describe qualitative research as a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live.

3.4.1 Selection of Participants for Qualitative Research

A total of sixty (60) members were involved in the qualitative study. Out of the number, twenty were randomly selected for the in-depth individual interview. The remaining 40 constituted a total of eight focus groups (five in each focus group). The participants of the study were randomly selected under the following criteria and categories:

- a) Members of the Church who are above 18 years of age (basic qualification);
- b) There were four congregations randomly selected for the study
- c) Two focus groups from each congregation were used with each focus group comprising five members;
- d) In addition, five other members in each congregation were selected for in-depth Interviews

These five members were selected from the following categories:

- i. one member who was regular at class meetings, attending at least 75% of the meetings within the research period;
- ii. One member who was irregular at class meetings, attending below 50% within the research collection period.
- iii. one member who attends church service but not class meetings was identified for participation;
- iv. One pastor was originally billed to be part of each focus group but this was altered to give the slot to any other youth above the age of 18 years.
- v. One class leader was originally billed to be part of the two focus groups per each congregation but this was altered to allow only one of the two groups to include a class leader.

This slot in the other group was given to any other female above the age of 18 years.

The above modifications were to encourage the group members to feel free to express their opinions, since the issues under consideration concerned how the pastors and leaders relationship and involvement in the class, or small group meetings is desired by members of the church and also how such relational involvement in the class or small group meeting impacts on church growth.

3.4.2 Data Collection Procedure

According to Phelps, Fisher and Ellis (2007), collecting data lies at the heart of the research process. The data were collected at the church premises. A list of questions was devised for the interviews. The participants were informed about the general aim of the study that is,

pursuing church growth through pastoral relationships with the classes or small groups. In addition, the participants were assured of absolute confidentiality regarding the information they provide. The interviews covered in detail the experiences and perspectives of the respondents on the pastor's involvement in the small group (class meeting) as well as in the affairs of members with particular reference to pastoral care, visitation, and general attention. The fifteen (15) focus group discussions and forty-six (46) in-depth interviews took place on the church premises respectively. The focus group discussions lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. It did not exceed 60 minutes. The in-depth interviews also lasted for minutes. The researcher first explained the aims of the Interviews and focus group sessions and established the ground rules for the session. Prior to the interviews they signed the consent forms.

This study investigated the influence that the pastor and leaders' involvement in the small group or class meeting has on the members' own involvement in the Bible Class and organizational groups meetings as well as their church attendance. The participants talked about their knowledge of the church governance and any suggestions for improvement on church membership drive. Two field assistants, carefully selected and trained by the researcher assisted him.

3.5 Phase II: Quantitative Study:

The second phase was the quantitative approach based on structured questionnaire survey among church members and pastors, to test the statistical significance of the findings from the qualitative studies. Structured questionnaire interviews findings were used to provide accurate presentations of the findings as well as to formulate rational and sound conclusions and

recommendations for the study. This allowed for comparative approach, based on the findings from the study and previous empirical researches on relational discipleship in pastoral care.

3.5.1 Selection of Participants

A total of 650 church members were selected from five congregations for the structured questionnaire survey. I used Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) rule to establish the 650-sample size. The participants of the study were randomly selected under the following criteria and categories:

3.5.2 Sample Size Estimation

Fidell's (2001) rule was used to establish the sample size for this study. According to Tabachnick and Fidell the best and the simplest way of determining sample size is

$$N \geq 50 + 8 m$$

Where: m is the number of explanatory variables.

Where researcher wishes to know the significance of each variable separately, they recommend the formula below:

$$N \geq 104 + m$$

This study was meant to determine the significance of each of the four variables separately and so the recommended formula used was:

$$N \geq 104 + m \text{ (where } m = 4 \text{)}$$

The actual total sample was to be 432. Taking into consideration the missing data and dropout rate of about 10% the total sample was increased to 650.

Members of the church who are above 18 years of age qualified to participate in the study.

The participants were also to be from:

- a. highly active congregation (congregation with an average of 70% of members attending class meeting)
- b. low active congregation (congregation with an average of 40% of members attending class meeting)

3.5.2 Exclusion Criteria

Participants excluded from the study:

- a. Under 18 years of age
- b. Do not want to participate.

3.5.3 Data Collection Tools/Measures for Quantitative Studies

The questionnaire for this study was devised based on the results from qualitative study. The secondary sources of literature used to devise the questionnaire was Methodist Church Ghana Conference¹⁰², and Synod¹⁰³ minutes/agenda and other published literature and articles from journals, theses and related studies on discipleship, pastoral care and church growth.

The questionnaire was designed to measure the following: church and class (small group) attendance, participation in church programmes, relationship with church leadership and governance, pastor and leaders' leadership styles, etc. The questions were on 5-point Likert

¹⁰² Conference is the governing body of the MCG constituted and meeting biennially.

¹⁰³ Synod is a meeting constituted in a Diocese which shall advise and assist the Conference and the Diocesan Bishop in the development of the work of God in and through the Circuits of the Diocese.

scale (1932)¹⁰⁴. Each item on the questionnaire consisted of a statement, to which the participant was expected to respond, “Strongly agree,” “agree,” “somewhat agree,” “disagree,” “strongly disagree.” The responses were scored with a 1 for strongly disagree to a 5 for strongly agree for each subscale. Higher scores were associated with exhibition of the behaviour the research wishes to measure.

3.5.4 Quantitative Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected towards the end of the church service on each occasion. The questionnaire surveys were strictly confidential using the check-box analysis where participants were invited to tick the appropriate answers in closed-ended question format. The questions contained an ordered set of answers and a common ordinal scale asking about levels of satisfaction as suggested by Dillman and Christioan (2009). Those who were willing to take part were asked to complete the consent form before they were made to participate in the study. They were then asked to complete the questionnaire without any discussion with fellow participants. The researcher and his assistants assisted those who could not complete the questionnaire by themselves. The questionnaires were numbered and participants were not required to provide their names. This was to avoid any incidence of bias, prejudice, or predisposition on the part of the participants. The data were collected at the church premises.

¹⁰⁴ A type of psychometric response scale in which the responders specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in five points (5) Strongly agree; (4) agree; (3) somewhat agree; (2) disagree; (1) strongly disagree. In: Preedy V. R., Watson R. R. Ed. (2010). Handbook of Disease Burden and Quality of Life Measure. Springer, New York, NY.

3.5.5 Ethical consideration/ Statement of ethical clearance obtained or required

As a requirement of the University, approval was sought from the Methodist Church Ghana for clearance before commencing interviews with the church members. The clearance obtained from the hierarchy of the Methodist Church Ghana that permitted me to seek permission from each of the participating Circuits before commencement of the research has been attached as Appendix D. In addition, all the participants (for the Focus Group Discussion and the Structure Questionnaire Survey) were made to sign consent forms before the commencement of the study. A copy of the consent form is attached as Appendix C.

Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the research prior to inclusion in the study. Before the commencement of the interview, the participants were made to understand that their participation in the study was purely voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw at any point in time of the data collection process if they so desired. In addition, assurance was given that the confidentiality of the respondents would be respected and they were also assured of their anonymity since their names were not needed. Each participant was made to give both verbal and written consent indicating his or her willingness to participate in the study.

3.5.6 Data Protection

In the qualitative stage, the discussion was audio-taped and transcribed. Participants were given 24 hours to notify the researcher if they wished their contribution not to be transcribed. Transcription began after 24 hours, and it was completed within one week after the discussions. As soon as the research had been completed, the audio-recording was deleted.

Participants were given fictitious names to allow identification of their contributions in the transcript. The researcher recorded only the fictitious names in the transcript. The only record of their real names was on the signed consent form. There was no way of connecting the signed consent forms to specific contributions in the transcript. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire but their names were not entered into this form. Audio-recordings, transcripts and consent forms were kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use.

In the quantitative stage, the questionnaire for each participant was marked with a unique code. The participants were asked not to write their names on any part of the questionnaires. No record was kept of the names of the participants other than their signature on the consent forms. There was no way of connecting the consent forms to completed questionnaires.

Participants were asked to make a note of their unique code. They were asked to contact the researcher within 24 hours with their code if they wished their questionnaires to be destroyed. Completed questionnaires were kept in a locked filing cabinet when not in use.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSES OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.

This chapter describes the data analyses and findings of the qualitative and quantitative studies. The first section describes the analysis of the qualitative study (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions). The second section is on the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires administered to test the findings from the qualitative study. The findings from the two studies are reported after each of the data analyses.

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation

To analyse the qualitative data, the taped interviews were transcribed verbatim according to the aim of the study and the resulting texts analysed by using thematic analysis. Transcripts were analysed using basic deductive approach. An attempt was first made to extract broad themes from the transcripts and then progressed to identifying coded themes. In establishing themes, considerations were given to statements of meaning that were present in most of the relevant data. In an attempt to ensure the credibility of the findings, independent codes were used to verify the themes extracted from the data. This allowed the researcher to progressively focus on the interviews and observations, and to decide how to test the emerging conclusions. Quotes from respondents were used to support the emerging patterns of concepts from the data. The findings are reported according to the aim of the study.

4.3 The Steps of Qualitative Data Analysis (In-depth Interviews & Focus Groups)

The Data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Steps of Qualitative Data Analysis. Firstly, to familiarize myself with the data, the transcribed data were read through

the text a number of times, noting down initial ideas and interesting features relevant to the aim of the study.

Step 2 of the process: notes down the initial ideas and interesting features of the data such as the language used and the semantics (both stated and implied) and then generate them into codes in a systematic fashion across the entire data set whilst collating data relevant to each code.

Step 3 of the process: after all the data have been coded and different codes identified, search and the codes collated into potential themes.

Step 4 of the process: check and refine the generated themes in relation to the coded extracts to determine whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern and in relation to the entire data set.

Step 5 involves a review of the themes to further refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells while generating clear definitions and names for each theme. Generate more specific themes that address the research questions within these broader categories; noting the language used by the participants in discussing the issues.

Step 6 and final step involves providing examples/extracts which demonstrate or capture the essence of the relevant points and relate them to the research questions and literature.

These examples are written in italics.

4.4 Findings from the Qualitative Data Analysis

The findings from the qualitative data analysis were as follows:

4.4.1 The Structural Arrangement Put in Place to Support Church Leadership in Their Discipleship Roles

The participants knew about the structural arrangements put in place to foster relationship with the church leadership. When participants were asked about the structural arrangements put in place to promote strong relationship between pastoral and church leadership on the one hand and church members on the other, the participants mentioned bible classes, church organizations and organizational meetings, with the minister and the “Leaders’ Meeting” where the leaders and pastors meet fortnightly to interact and to discuss the progress being made by the church. They knew that Leaders Meeting is the highest decision-making body that all the participants mentioned. They know that communication of issues should be through the lass leaders, as well as direct communication with the pastors. See Excerpts 1 & 2 below:

Excerpt 1: “I see the class meeting as the main formal arrangement by which the leaders can interact with their members. There are other organizational meetings which also provide the opportunity for the leaders to meet their members. Every member is supposed to leave their numbers with the leaders so that in case a leader does not see a member, he or she can call and if there is the need to follow up then s/he will do that”.

Excerpt 2: “It has also been arranged for the organizations to visit the minister once a month and the minister to also visit the groups regularly. So that is the arrangement that has been put in place to promote relationship

between the leadership and members. But as to how the leaders use them is another thing”.

The main official structures are the class system and class leader and assistant class leader positions and organizational membership to disciple members. The participants said the structural arrangements put in place to promote discipleship and consequently church growth and to usher them into leadership roles. They indicated that the class meetings are to be used to teach, develop and mentor members and to make them true disciples of Christ. The leaders were expected to participate fully in all church programmes and activities. They indicated that the leaders are to attend class meeting and have assistant class leaders who deputize for them.

Excerpt 3: “Normally we attend class as expected, although these days a lot of people don’t come. The number sometimes goes down and at another time it comes up a little. It’s not regular”.

Excerpt 4: “As for my leader he is always present. If for any reason he can’t come, his assistant steps in to handle the class. My leader also always attends church programmes.”

On how the structural arrangement is helping class leaders to relate very well with the members, the participants mentioned Bible class meetings and sending of daily Bible verses and passages that members were to note and to memorize and prayer topics to pray about were mentioned. They revealed that the Bible class serves as the

medium of discipleship and there are times the church has teaching services during which the whole church is taught various topics. The leaders also use text messages to maintain contacts and to foster relationship between members and leaders. The “Leaders’ Meeting” is also there for leaders to report on issues concerning their members.

Excerpt 5: “One thing that goes on in the church is the use of text messages. They inform us about a lot of issues that are happening. Every day they give us daily Bible verses/passages and prayer topics that we should pray about. This also keeps us in touch and so one always knows the church is concerned or knows that you are there”.

Excerpt 6: “If there are issues affecting their members whom they had visited, there is have the “Leaders’ Meeting” as a forum to bring such issues to the notice of the collective leadership. However, it is not a structured arrangement that every time the leaders meet, the minister demands that they give report on their members who are sick or afflicted”.

Leadership development programmes such as seminars, workshops and retreats are also used to update and equip the leaders so that they can play their roles effectively as they disciple the members was also described. They expected the leaders to make use of modern technology for further strengthen the relationships.

4.4.2 Discipleship through Bible Class and other church programmes and activities

The participants were also of the view that Class Meetings and visits by the leaders promote relational discipleship. They were also of the view that the sitting arrangement in the church had been organized in such a way as to promote relationship in the church. This is because they may choose to sit with their friends or wherever in the class and at any other meeting. Midweek services such as Wednesday prayer meetings, revivals and retreats and Sunday Divine services were all considered as structures used by the church to build relationships. Society meetings were also mentioned as part of the structure. The participants perceived the leaders as doing well in the discipleship of their members, with some of the leaders delegating functions to some of their deputies and class members.

Excerpt 7: I will also like to add that in terms of the discipleship they are doing well. I can say that because they are growing old, currently most of them delegate their responsibilities and involve some of us so we can say they are doing well with the discipleship.

Though the participants were of the view that the structures were there and known by all the members, they were also of the view the leaders did not to utilize structures effectively for discipleship. They claim some of the leaders appear not to care about their members and so they do not visit or look for their members who absent themselves from class meetings over a period, and therefore are not able to report on them. They claim it a few members who take it upon themselves to visit absentee colleagues.

Implying that aside the obvious structural arrangement put in place to support church leadership in their discipleship roles, members want the leader to be directly involved in their personal lives. They expected the leaders particularly the pastors to know much about their members' needs without the members informing them. Some participants were of the view that, the discipleship and general development of members was done indirectly through the class meetings and the organizations as well as the leaders' meeting. They claim the direct approach is when it had to deal with members' personal needs. They wanted the pastors and leaders to know the houses of the members and to visit them. Some expect their pastor to visit the class and to have direct one-on-one interaction with members. Others contented that the pastors have other duties and roles that they attend to and so cannot visit all the members. The Excerpts below reflect the views.

Excerpt 8: *“Discipleship is not only in the church but also outside the church. When you go to the rural areas, probably because of the size of the area, the caretaker or the pastor in charge knows every member of the church and even during church service if the person is not around the pastor by headcount will see that this person is not in. So, they mostly go out from house to house to visit members who are not active members.*

Excerpt 9: *“But more often than not it is about the members they see at class meetings, but as for those they haven't seen for a long time, they virtually don't report on them. I for one, my leader has never visited me before. Sometimes after*

three or four months he would call and ask of me, but to come to the house to visit me, it is out”.

Excerpt 10: But when you come to the urban areas, it is very difficult for the pastor in charge to notice that a particular person is absent from church service or church activities. So, they should try their best to at least cover about 50% or more by paying visitation to members in their various houses.”

Excerpt 11: “In some cases too where some of the members live is almost inaccessible or difficult to access, therefore I for one won’t falter my leader if he hasn’t visited me.

Excerpt 12: “As a leader, you have to either know your members’ houses or even their telephone numbers, so that if you have not seen the person for some time, you can call the person. Are they doing that? For me the answer is no. Our pastor does not have any direct involvement in the members and the class meeting.”

Excerpt 13: “Our pastors and leaders should be observant. If they are observant and there is somebody who is worried, troubled or happy they can notice it and help address the problem. But if you are not observant people will be going and coming, sometimes you won’t even see the person. It is like a teacher and her

class; you should know your students. It is not only when the members come to church that you get to know them. When you know them they can open up to you”

Some were sympathetic of their leaders as they recognised the distant locations that some members reside that make it practically difficult for the leaders to visits. That notwithstanding some expect the leaders to either call them on phone to find out about their wellbeing or use other means to get the information. The Excerpts above and 15 & 16 below reflect the views.

Excerpt 14: *“This aspect has to do more with the wellbeing of the members and the concern shown by the leaders. But these days, people don’t have enough time so the leaders are not able to visit their members. That is why classes are being trimmed to maximum of six members to a leader so that the leaders can be visiting the members. If a leader is working in a company and is always engaged in the office and sometimes closes late, how can he make time to visit his members?”*

Excerpt 15: *“But others may not see it that way. Again, the leaders can be a bit innovative by calling their members to ask about their wellbeing, if they cannot physically visit them in their homes”.*

Those of the view that the leaders do not effectively disciple their members were also of the view that *“There is no structures that compels the leaders to visit their members who have not*

been to class for a long time". They are of this view because they do not see any form of sanction or ways of getting the leaders to be effective. They assert that because discipleship has to do with a Christians wellbeing, they have to do all they can to be effective.

However, they all agreed that the leaders visit on special occasions such as *"if a member is not well or has given birth or is bereaved the leaders visit them and then report to the minister/pastor who will also arrange to visit the members, and the church often gives a donation" ... "This encourages the members and somehow it boosts their commitment to the church"* Excerpt 16.

The participants expect both the leaders and members to motivate each other as well as organize activities that promote socialization. They suggested that drama, role plays and modelling could sometimes be staged to make practical the lessons and to make them understand the lessons better. Also, the class discussions could focus on issues that address personal concerns, such as financial management; land acquisition procedures; and courtship; claim some members do not have any other forum to talk about such issues. It should however be pointed out that the topics mentioned are normally addressed during "Teaching Service" which are to be held on third Sundays of every quarter. Teaching Services are usually held on Sunday during divine service.

4.4.3 Leadership Commitment and Involvement in Christian and Social Life of

Members:

Both the leaders and members were blamed for not playing their roles well in the discipleship process. Some were of the opinion that the leaders attended programmes they perceived as

beneficial only even though they are supposed to be involved in all church programmes and activities. They revealed that these lay leaders were selective in terms of programmes they chose to attend and do not attend mid-week programmes; though their participation will boost interest and encourage members also to participate or attend the programmes. They also expected the leaders to visit members in their homes to encourage them to participate in church programmes and to participate in house to house evangelization; but defended that the leaders do not do those things expected of them because most of them were aged. All the same, the leaders were considered as doing well in the discipleship of their members, with some of the leaders delegating functions to some of their deputies and class members. To boost attendance at class meetings, the participants expected leaders to use the telephone calls, WhatsApp and text messages to contact members frequently.

Excerpt 17: “Class meetings involve small number of members and so are to be used by the leaders to disciple the members including inactive members. The class leader is supposed to gather information about the members, know their problems and help them solve those problems.” ... “The lay leaders and the pastor have responsibility towards the members. The system suggests that the leader should be well abreast with the member’s life, what is going on and then that leader would inform leaders’ meeting any time they meet.

Excerpt 18: However, there are some leaders who do not even attend class meeting and therefore do not have first-hand information about their members. There are some leaders who do not know the names of most members whose names are in the class

book. This makes it impossible for such leaders to report on their members at the leaders' meeting."

Some of the participants were happy with their leaders. These participants saw their leaders as supportive, but expect them to interact with members of the church who are not in their Bible Classes. *Excerpts 19 and 20 below reflect the comments made:*

Excerpt 19: "In our class the relationship with our leader is very strong. He calls us often and we provide welfare support for each other. It is purely internal class arrangement and not a structural arrangement from the top"

Excerpt 20: "As for the leaders, I think they interact with only their class members. I do not see them interacting with members of other bible class leader; but if I belong to the class the interaction is there. So, the leaders and their own class members interact a lot".

Whereas some expect the members also to be proactive by contacting the leaders as well if they do not hear from their leaders; especially if they have challenges. They expect the members to have the contact numbers of each other so as to interact frequently with one another. Others were more pessimistic about the expectation of some members who do not attend class meetings. These people are of the views that such members will not attend class meetings no matter what. Yet, they expected the leader to persist and pay them frequent visits to those members hoping that some may change their minds. These participants claim the

problem may be from the leadership. They implicated the leaders' "spirituality" (that is, the leader's Christian maturity to lead others). See the excerpts below that reflects the comments from the participants.

Excerpt 21: "Leadership is by example, and therefore if the leaders get more involved in church activities it will encourage their members to also participate and get more involved which will help move their spirituality forward."

Excerpt 22: "And if the members see the leader's spirituality and commitment, they will not be worried so much about his inability to visit them; it all depends on the level of spirituality of the members."

Excerpt 23: "We can look at the members own spirituality and know the level of spirituality of the leaders. It is said that fish starts rotting from the head, therefore the members level of spirituality is a reflection of the leaders' spirituality."

It appears some of the lay leaders do not live by example even though the members expect leadership by example. They therefore fail to use the Wesleyans leadership command.

4.4.4 Pastors and Leaders' and Involvement in Social Life of Members:

Pastors presence at meetings and home visits were considered important. Many of the members are of the view that the pastors interact with the church members as well as visits

members at their places of abode. For the pastors, they reported that they were active participants in the programmes because they run weekly Bible class for leaders and go through the, “*Weekly Bible Lessons*” book with them before the leaders go and teach their members. They also reported that the pastors supervise the Bible class meetings. The excerpts below reflect some of their views:

Excerpt 24: “What I have seen is that when class meetings are taking place, the minister will be going round or popping in to see what is going on. When they come, they help the members understand issues being discussed so that members don’t deviate, so their presence is beneficial.”.

Excerpt 25: When our leader or even the minister comes to the class it gingers up every body and it encourages members to ask questions in order to get better clarification. It also affords the members the opportunity to interact with the leader or minister.

Excerpt 26: “I am a member of the Guild and sometimes the pastor attends our organizational meeting and most of the time after church service I see her having interaction with a lot of church members. I know a lot of people who also call on her at her office and in her house. So, in my opinion, there is a lot of interactions between the pastor and the members. Also, I think with the visits it makes people get closer to her than distancing them from her”.

Excerpt 27: “I think with the visits, as my sister has said, the pastor often visits members and they also express their joy when they see the pastor visiting them and by so doing most of the members who have absented themselves from church service sometimes respond to the visits”.

4.4.5 Perceived Maturity and Religiosity of The Church Leadership

Participants used class meeting and church attendance, participation in midweek services, activities and programmes and the types of programmes run by the church to determine the leaders’ level of spiritual maturity or religiosity. Some did not perceive the leaders as spiritual or religious. They claim church members are unwilling to accept leadership position in the church, because the leaders are not spiritual or religious enough. To them most of the leaders are not “Called”. The excerpts below are from some of the members:

Excerpt 28: “We can know how spiritual the church leadership is based on the kind of programmes they come up because the leadership do come up with more revival programmes, retreats and prayer meetings than the social such as ‘meet-me-there’. The church leadership is able to get the church participate massively in those programmes. So I can confidently say that their level of spirituality is high”.

Excerpt 29: “If we are supposed to measure spirituality by the way people attend church service and other meetings then we can say that the leaders usually attend the Sunday divine service but we do not see them during the

week, the other days are usually left for the youth. So, if I am to judge by the attendance to services then I will say that the leaders are only spiritual during Sundays.”

Excerpt 30: “These days it is difficult getting leaders for our groups or organizations, you have to coax people, and you have to try to talk to a lot of people before they accept positions. So sometimes it doesn’t even come with looking at the religiosity of the person, so whoever is ready to do the work, and even those that we coax they are lackadaisical. But all the same if the person is willing to do the work, the person will avail him or herself and then maybe grow and as we go along you learn and then you see yourself maturing. That is how I will put it.”

Excerpt 31: “I think in the past those attending leadership courses did so because they felt called. That is why in the past we had a lot of leaders, but currently some of the pastors or resident ministers can just see somebody and tell him or her that you have to go to the leadership training school. So to some people they feel like they are forcing them to be leaders. So most of them when the church is organizing programmes for our spiritual growth they don’t see the importance of it. They will not attend because they will say after all I was forced to go to the leadership school”.

The above suggest that leaders Commitment to the church is questionable. This calls to question the maturity of the leaders themselves. Intentionality is a factor that underpins relational discipleship and involvement in small group life was a primary spiritual discipline in Jesus' life (Earley & Gutierrez, 2010). This appear to be absent in some of the leaders. Others perceived their leaders as "Born Again" and so are good Christians who are also spiritual. These persons seemed sympathetic to the leaders and therefore attributed the latter's absence from church programmes to old age.

Excerpt 32: "Because most of our leaders are ageing, when such programmes are organized they don't attend. Some of the leaders are trying. They understand what they are doing and are doing their best". "I must say our leaders who are in this church, most of them are born again, they understand what it is to be born again, they understand the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they understand the things of the Spirit. So, with most of our leaders, their spiritual level is higher than that of their members. They understand the things of the Spirit when you take leadership positions in the church."

Excerpt 33: "When we organize programmes, most leaders attend even more than the members. It is because they understand the things of the Spirit. Gone are those days when we had leaders who may be didn't know Christ but because they were in the church for a long time and because of certain things they were appointed leaders. Now we have leaders who

know Christ; so they are able to tell their members their personal experiences. So I will say the spirituality/religiosity of our leaders is very high.”

Those who perceived their leaders as spiritual used personal spiritual growth of the leader to determine the maturity and religiosity and its effect on their members. They saw the leaders too as applying the word of God to every situation and practice what the Word says. On a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being the highest, an average score of six (6) was given for leadership religiosity; minister’s was eight (8). They indicated that the religiosity of the leaders had effect on members’ behaviours as well as Bible Class attendance.

Excerpt 26: “ “When you look at our current numerical strength it is not increasing at the rate at which we expect it to. The numbers of those (church) who are committed are growing and others too I am not sure.”

Some were of the view that spirituality could be defined or described in different ways. So it is not easily be assessed and so did not want to commit themselves. The following excerpts reflect their views:

Excerpt 34: “When it comes to spiritual matters it becomes difficult to judge because we all have our spiritual gifts and then if you don’t see somebody in the role or how you expect that person to perform you may think that person is weak. May be when we talk about the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11) we can address it from that angle.”

Excerpt 35: *“I also wish to state that our leaders are very religious in the sense of following procedures, for example, ensuring that members come to church on time. When you do not come early they will query you and make sure that next time you come on time. When you are supposed to stand when singing even the old ones will stand and expect the young ones to also stand, so in that regard I can say our leaders are very religious.”*

Excerpt 36: *“The leaders and some of the members have the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I think the expectations about some of the leaders is a bit questionable because you may have a leader who is perceived as not powerful” (vivacious) but he/she can talk to you in a way that you will be convinced to do something. Some members of the church want leaders who are vivacious and therefore tend to look down on the leaders they consider as calm and supposedly not ‘powerful; but there are some leaders who may be very calm but would also be inspiring people.”*

Excerpt 37: *“On the other hand, we can measure the perception of the membership on the spirituality of the leaders in several ways: the spirituality of the leaders can be seen from the extent to which the various organizations involve the leaders in their programmes; also the extent to which the members commit themselves to programmes organized by the leaders. These are the perception they have about the spirituality of the*

leaders” ... “They say, ‘Leadership by example’ so if she is not able to show more spirituality then it can affect my spiritual growth”.

The Bible class system is a key relational discipleship strategy that follows Jesus’ pattern of ministry. But as mentioned above leadership spiritual maturity and commitment has been questionable and so are not able to reflect Christ in their leadership. This confirms Paintsil (2008). Obeng Adjei (2013) found that members’ commitment to church activities has decreased and reported that the majority of the members.

4.4.6 Leadership and discipleship styles of the ministers and class leaders

The participants mentioned various leadership styles as employed by the leaders of their churches in their discipleship. The styles mentioned are autocratic (authoritative) Transactional, Interpersonal (transformational), Democratic (participatory) and Serving (servant leadership). No mention was made of laissez faire leadership. The excerpts below reflect the various ideas.

Excerpt 38: *“Our leader uses the democratic style or approach whereby he introduces us to what we are supposed to study. He brings the question on board and we all discuss and he takes everyone’s point of view no matter what the situation and all that”.*

Excerpt 39: *“To me, I think, it is the servant style that they employ because some of the leaders do visit their members and one way or the other it is*

another form of serving. As a leader you have to go to your people even if they don't often come to meetings”.

Excerpt 40: “I see my leader as exhibiting more interpersonal approach. He is able to relate to everybody and opens the way for everybody to speak or make a contribution. The leader is very democratic and allows members to express their views freely. He is not the vindictive type”.

Excerpt 41: “Our class leader often uses testimonial (transformational) style, using his own life experiences to address members' concerns and problems. He sometimes uses his own lifestyle as example to illustrate a point and most often it inspires us”. Testimonial style is dimension of transformational leadership style.

The comments from the participants support the findings from Dagogo, et al (2018) that Church leaders utilize various leadership styles for discipleship and church growth. However, others had different views about the discipleship styles that are employed by the church leadership. These participants perceived their leaders as preaching during Bible Class meetings rather than teach, guide and to coach the members. They did not perceive any obvious leadership styles such leaders employed.

Excerpt 42: “It is expected of every class leader to lead and not to preach in one's interaction with his or her members, but there are occasions when

they conduct the class meeting as if it were a church service. If the class is to run for one hour, they will talk for about forty-five minutes and they leave the rest for announcement and other things”.

Excerpt 43: “So far as I know, some of the leaders when they come to class meeting will talk and talk and he or she will not allow the members to express their views and in other class meetings the leaders give their members the chance to express their views”.

Excerpt 44: “I also observe that a class where the members do not have confidence in themselves, they allow the leader to be undemocratic. But in a class where the members are so confident in themselves, they will interrupt to create a chance for them to also express their opinion”.

Some of the leaders also appear not to prepare adequately for the Bible Class Meetings. Or they handle the class as they please. Some referred to such the leaders as autocratic in their dealings with the class members. Refer Excerpts above

4.4.7 Members Commitment and Participation in Church programmes and activities:

The participants’ responses revealed the extent to which pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of their members, with the view to making disciples and mentoring their spiritual growth, determines the level of the church members’ interest in activities and commitment to the church. Some participants are of the view that participation

of members in church programmes and activities and commitments depend on members' preferences. They claim most members prefer programmes like “*all-night*” prayer meetings, “*revival*” and “*retreats*”; attendance at church programmes tend to be very high. Some however, are committed to church organizations. They participate in their organizations more than any other church programmes. Therefore that could also be used to show “*how committed they are to Christ.*”

I see that the members are committed to serving the Lord, especially when you look at their involvement in their organizational activities Excerpt 45.

Others are of the opinion that members are committed to Christ and the church, but their other engagements like job and family matters sometimes make it impossible for them to attend church programmes.

Many were of the view that pastors and lay leaders' commitment and involvement in the affairs of their members motive the member to participate in class meeting and other church programmes.

Excerpt 46: “I must say our pastor’s familiarization with the members has encouraged most of them to emulate her and has deepened relationships among the church members. So nowadays attendance to programmes has soared. They see the pastor showing concern and relating well with members. In my opinion, her exemplary leadership has encouraged other leaders to also relate well with their members and thereby foster relationships among the members. So, when the leaders know their members and show interest in their affairs, it will impact on their level of spirituality and commitment.”

Excerpt 47: “It is better if we have their leaders call them and find out how they are doing and pray with them and send them text messages. I believe when we do that the members will see that the leadership has their interest at heart, so they will still be coming.”

The findings above suggest that church leaders’ examples and involvement in church activities and lives of the members are key effective discipleship strategies. The above also supports John Wesley’s requirement that leaders get involved in the affairs of their members and well as enquire of their wellbeing. Indeed, the leaders appear not to take advantage of the opportunities that the Bible Classes offer for discipleship. It appears as if leadership discipleship styles had not been intentional as suggested by Hull (2010:219) and Virgil Grant (2012). The leaders were perceived as portraying the nature and character of the Christ (Moore (2012:45). It is therefore not surprising that Foli (1995) found among Ghana Methodists that how and where the Bible Class meetings are held has been considered the major problem for the church in her quest of pursuing qualitative and quantitative church growth through discipleship strategies. The findings also confirmed Paintsil (2008). Obeng Adjei (2013) suggest that the use of the structured Bible Lessons for the meetings were helpful, as it promotes participation in discussion at Bible Class and curbs autocratic tendencies.

4.4.8 Summary of the findings from Qualitative Study

The study revealed that there are structural arrangements to assist leadership of the church to foster closer relationship with their members in pursuance of discipleship. The Bible Class meeting was cited as having been put in place for discipleship making and could be used to foster relationship between the church leadership and members. Participants also mentioned electronic media, especially by the use of text messages, the WhatsApp and telephone call to enhance discipleship drive and to address the problems associated with visitation.

However, it also emerged that some of the class leaders are not utilising this opportunity for discipleship. There were other provisions that were also seen as part of the structural arrangement that have been put in place to promote relational discipleship in the church.

These are the other small group organizations in the church such as the women, men and girls fellowship etc to help to deepen relationships. Prayer meetings, revivals, retreats and Sunday Divine service were all considered as structures by which relationship could be promoted.

The Leaders were said to use various leadership styles such as interactive, interpersonal, democratic, testimonial, mentoring or relational, and serving in their discipleship. Pastors were found to have had interaction with members, especially on Sundays. That was seen as improving relationship between the members and the pastors. The participants indicated that their pastors visited them or showed concern when members were afflicted but could not visit most members because of where the members live which they described as inaccessible and far. The participants also acknowledged the fact that in the urban areas it is extremely difficult

for the leaders to visit most of their members because of the distances away from where the leaders and pastors live.

Some respondents did not perceive their leaders as spiritual or religious. They used church attendance, participation in midweek activities and programmes and the type of programmes run by the church to assess the spirituality or religiosity of their leadership. They based their assessment in part on the lack of or unwillingness of members to accept leadership position in the church. They viewed most of the leaders as not called and therefore could not inspire the members. Yet others saw the level of the spirituality of the leaders as high; they based their argument on the ability of the leaders to mobilize their members to participate in programmes. The members used the spiritual growth of individuals to determine the religiosity of the leaders.

The involvement of leaders in class meetings was found to be above average. However, contrary to the expectations of the members, the leaders' participation in other programmes was erratic with the leaders selecting which programmes to attend. In the opinion of the participants the involvement of the leaders in such programmes would have inspired their members to attend.

The participants felt that class attendance can be boosted by the use of modern communication facilities like text messages, WhatsApp and phone calls. Even though physical visitation may not be possible for some reasons, the use of such electronic facilities can make members feel that leaders care about them and therefore may decide to be active in

class meetings. Also, the contents of class discussions should be made as practical as possible, for example the use of drama, role play and modelling. Further, members desire that occasionally class discussion could centre on socio-economic issues that affect members. Even though in the opinion of some participants attendance will not improve no matter what, some participants think that leaders should persist and pay more attention to visitation in order to boost attendance.

The Wesleyan Methodism and Class system as applied in the churches studied seem to exist in name rather than actions. The Class system has specific instructions and penal system which seem not to be applied at all by the churches.

However, to determine the veracity of the results from the qualitative research, the findings were tested statistically. The section below has the descriptive data of the results and the findings from the hypotheses that were tested.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FROM QUANTITATIVE STUDY (QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY)

To test the findings from the group interviews, structured questionnaire survey was carried out. The data from the questionnaire survey was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. For the descriptive data, the frequencies and range of the scores on the variables were checked. The distribution of the data was checked for skewness and outliers. The data was normally distributed and had no outliers. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test internal consistency (reliability) of the questionnaire used for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha for the questionnaire was .81. Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 is said to be the standard. The Pearson's Correlation analyses were used to determine whether or not

relationships exist between the variables of interest. Where relationship existed the direction and magnitude of the relationships were reported. Independent t-test and analysis was used to determine the differences between the demographic variables. Below are the findings.

4.5.2 DESCRIPTIVE DATA

4.5.2.1 The Sample

A total of 650 people participated in the study. They were from five Societies in three of the Circuits in the Accra Diocese. Figure 1 below has the graph presentation of the distribution of the participants. 27% of them were from Saint Luke's Society, Grace Societies 24% and 16% from Good News and Emmanuel Societies respectively. They comprised 475 (73%) Church Members, 161 (25%) Lay Leaders and 14 (2%) Pastors (*See Figure 2 below*).

Graphic presentation of the percentages of the participants per societies are in Figure1

Figure 1

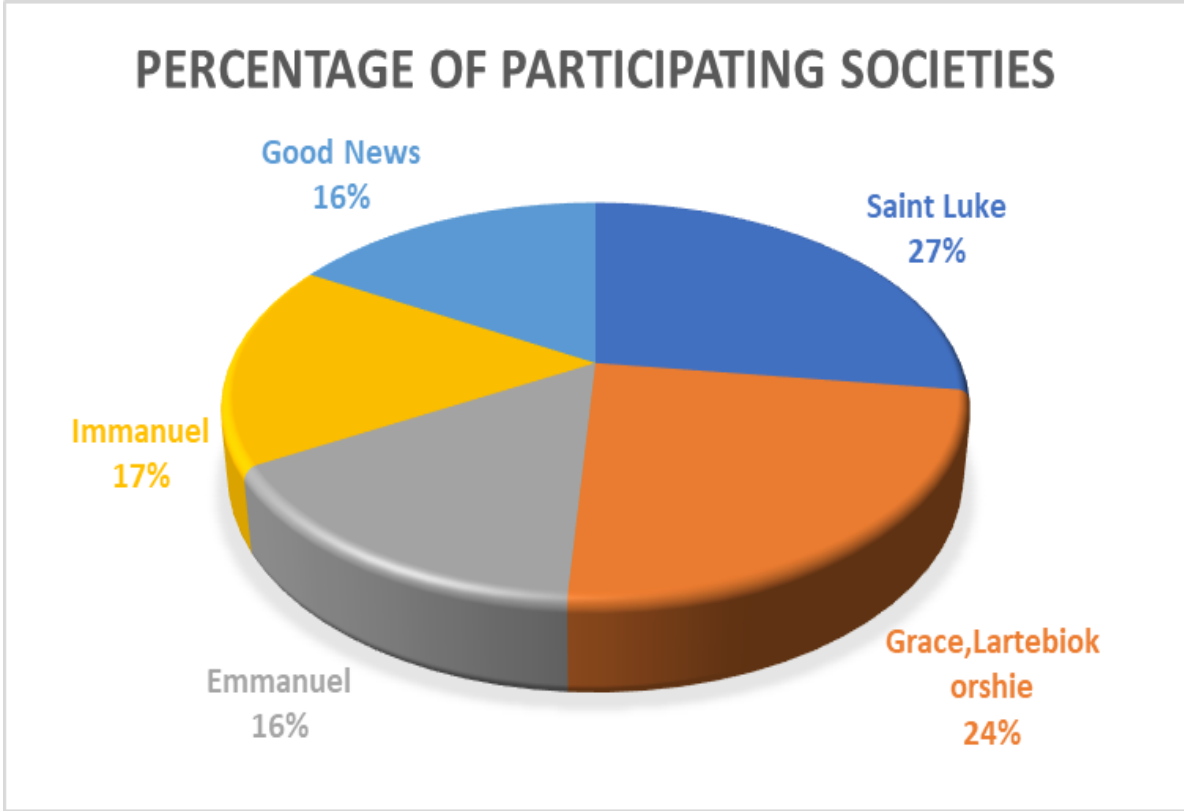


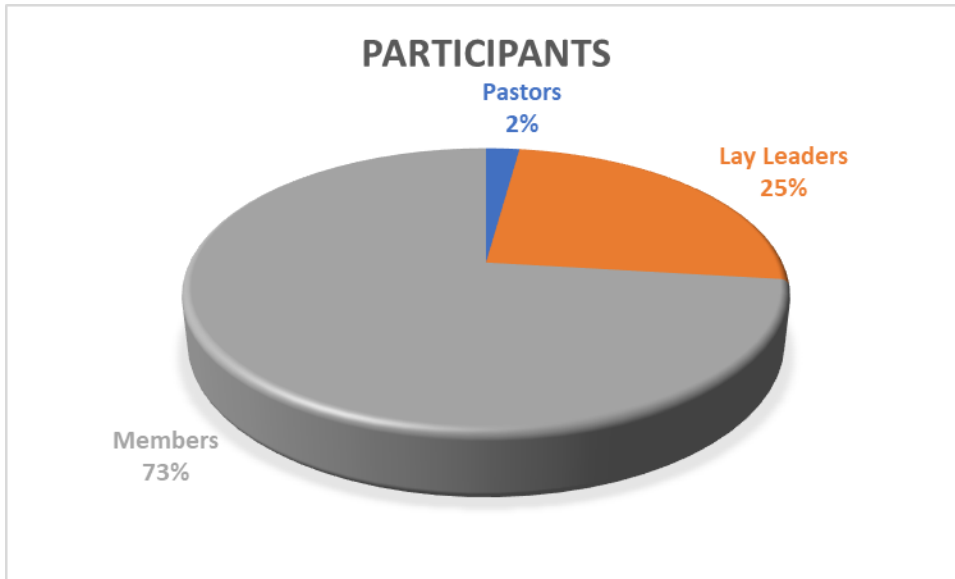
Table 1 below has the total number of participants per local congregation. For equity, the number of participants selected from each of the societies was based on the size of the church. The majority were from Saint Luke Society (27%) and the minority from Good News and Emmanuel societies.

Table 1

SOCIETY	PERCENT
Saint Luke, Abossey Okai	27
Grace, Lartebiokorshie	24
Emmanuel, Abossey Okai	16

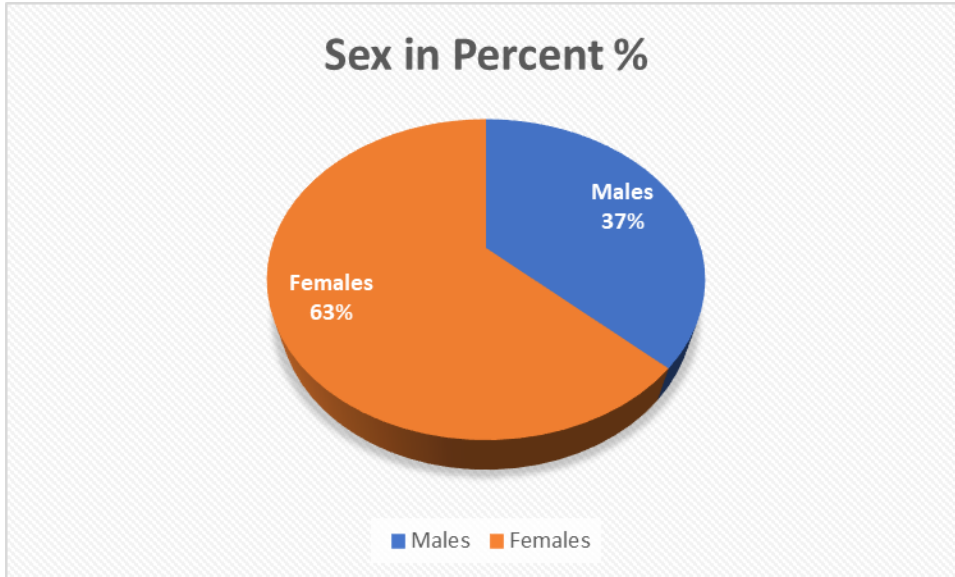
Immanuel, Gbawe/McCarthy Hill	17
Good News, Kaneshie North	16

Figure 2: Disaggregation of Participants



The sex distribution is males 231 [37%] and females = 419 (63%) females. Five of the pastors were females (See Figure 3 below)

Figure 3: Sex Distribution



4.6.2.2 Pastors: The mean age was 56.3 years (Standard Deviation was 7.6). The youngest was 34 years and the oldest 67 years old. Thirteen (13 [93%]) of them were married and 1 (7%) was single. They had been pastors for between one to sixteen years and had served in one to three stations. The majority (9) has four children; two have three children; one has five children; one has two children; and one has no child.

4.6.2.3 The pastors were mainly from three ethnic groups: Ga & Dangme – 8, Akan – 5 and Ewe – 1. The distribution of their ethnicity reflected the population distribution of the people living in the Accra Metropolis. The pastors were able to speak the languages of the natives.

4.6.2.3 Leaders (161): The mean age was 48.6 years (Standard Deviation was 13.3). The majority were 38 years old. One hundred and forty-five (145 [90%]) of them were married;

five (3%) were singles and widowed 11 (7%). The leaders were mainly from two ethnic groups: Ga & Dangme – 81 (50%), Akan –68 (42%) and Ewe – 7 (4%), Guan – 3 (2%), Bole Dagbane 2 (1%).

4.6.2.4 Participants: Church Members: A total of 475 church members who do not hold leadership positions participated in the study. Married members were 302 (64%); Singles 118 (25%); Divorced/Separated 15 (3%) and Widowed = 40 (8 %). The youngest participant was 18 years and the oldest 85 years. The majority were in their twenties. The mode age was 26 years. The median age of 38 years; with a mean age of 41. Refer to **Table 2 below** for the details. The **Figure 4 below** also shows that quite a sizeable number of the church members involved in the exercise were youth. A total of 54.7% of the respondents were aged between 18 years and 40 years. The elderly, 65 years and above comprised 13% (83) of the respondents. Figure 2 has the chart on the age group distribution.

Figure 4: Age Group of Participants

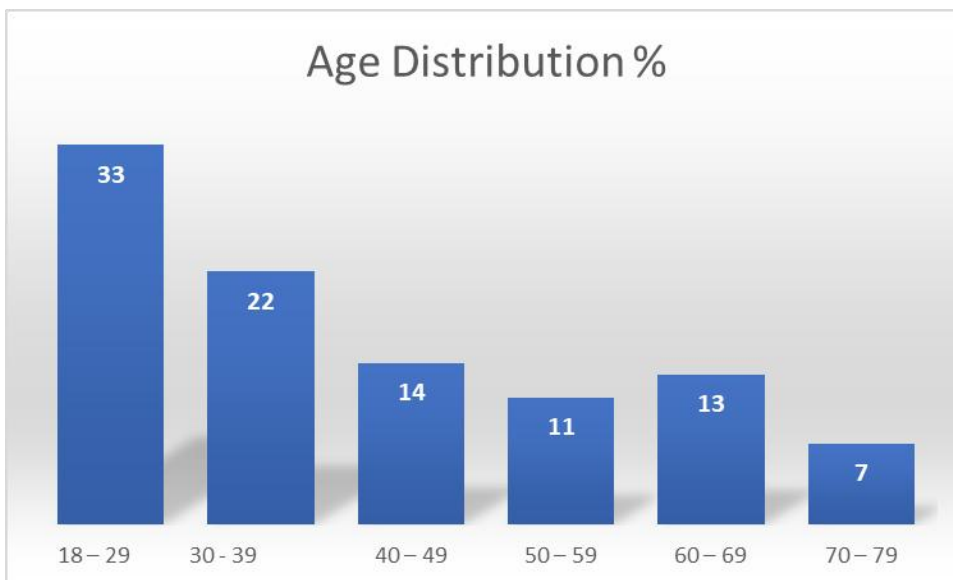


Table 2: Age Distributions of participants

Age Group in Years	Number	Percentage %
18 – 29	155	33
30 - 39	105	22
40 – 49	69	14
50 – 59	52	11
60 – 69	61	13
70 – 79	33	7
TOTAL	475	100

4.6.2.5 Ethnicity

The majority of church members were Ga & Dangme 239 (50%); 204 (43%) were Akan; Ewes 19 (4%) and Guans – 10 (2%). Others 3 (.6%). This is a fair representation of the ethnic groupings, with the two major tribes in the area covered dominating. See Table 3 below.

Table 3: Ethnicity

Ethnicity		
	Frequency	Percent %
Ga -Dangme	239	50
Akan	204	43
Ewe	19	4

Guan	10	2
Bole Dagbane	3	1
Total	475	100%

4.6.3 Church Activities Participation

4.6. 3.1 Class Membership

Apart from the pastors, all the participants belonged to Bible Classes at their respective churches. For the Methodist Church Ghana, Bible Class membership connotes persons who are recognized as belonging to the church and identified under various categories of membership. Full members are those who have fulfilled all the conditions of membership and therefore admitted to the Lord’s Supper. Full members were 597 (94%).

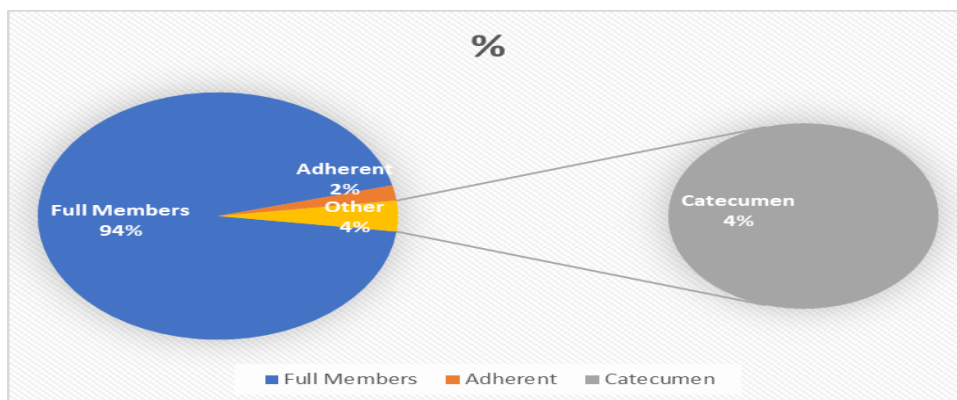


Figure 5: church Membership

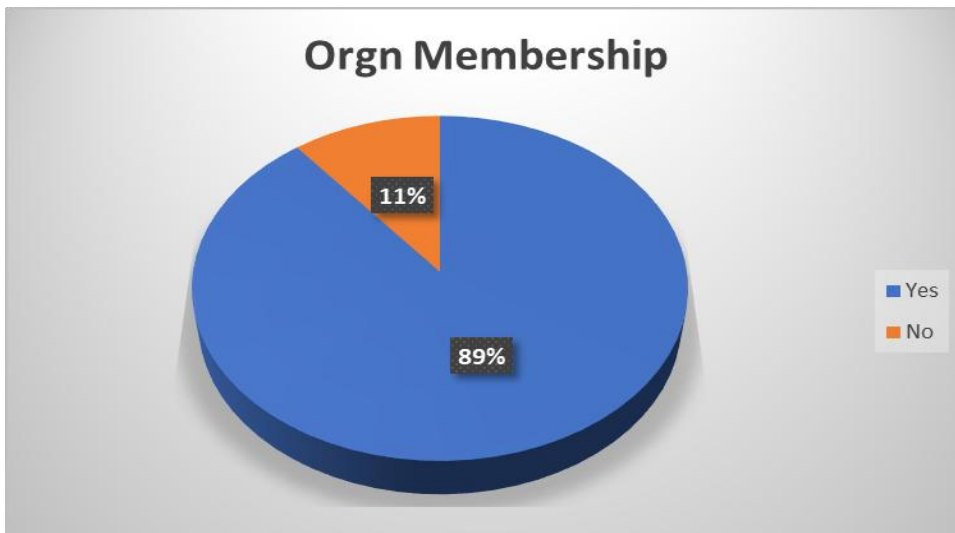
Adherents 15 (2%). Adherents are persons who are attached to the Society and seek the fellowship and nurture of the Church but are unable for one reason or another to accept the full discipline of membership. Catechumens were 24 (4%). Catechumens are Inquirers

(including those from other faiths) who are given some form of public recognition on being enrolled and are being instructed in the Christian faith in preparation for Full Membership. The involvement of all these categories of membership makes the opinions expressed by these respondents more reliable, arising out of their experience of the class environment.

4.6.3.2 Organizational Membership

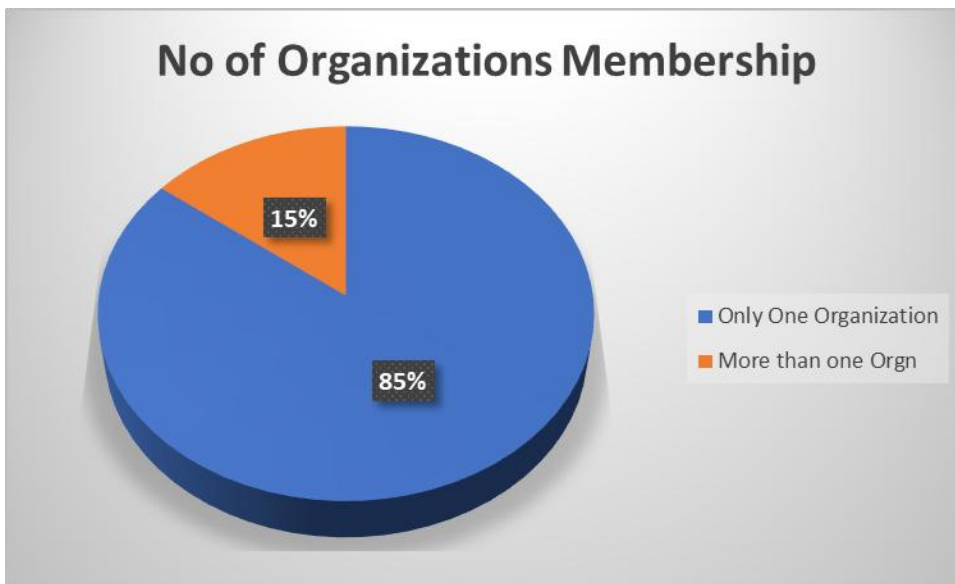
568 (89%) belonged to Organizations in the church. Of this number, 524 belonged to only one organization while the remaining 44 belonged to more than one group. The remaining 68 (11%) did not belong to any organization at all. Figure 5 below is the graph representation of the percentages.

Figure 6: Organizational Membership



Among those who belong to organization, 15% belong to more than one organization. The majority belong to at least one organization. These organizations, like Bible Class is to disciple the members for them to be like Christ. See Figure 6 below.

Figure 7: No of Organizations membership



4.6.4 Specific Church Activities & Programmes

When participants were asked about their knowledge and participation in church programmes and activities all (100%) stated they knew about Class Meetings and 72% attend Class meetings regularly. More than 90% know about midweek/evening services, weekly prayer meetings, organizational meetings, meet-me-here programmes, yet 27%, 31%, 55% and a mere 5.4% respectively attend these programmes regularly. Love feast, Circuit / Diocesan / Connexional programmes, and special quarterly teaching services were the other less patronized programmes/activities. Please refer to Table 5 and Figure 8 below for the knowledge/awareness and participation in the church programmes and activities.

Figure 8: Awareness versus participation in Church programmes and Activities

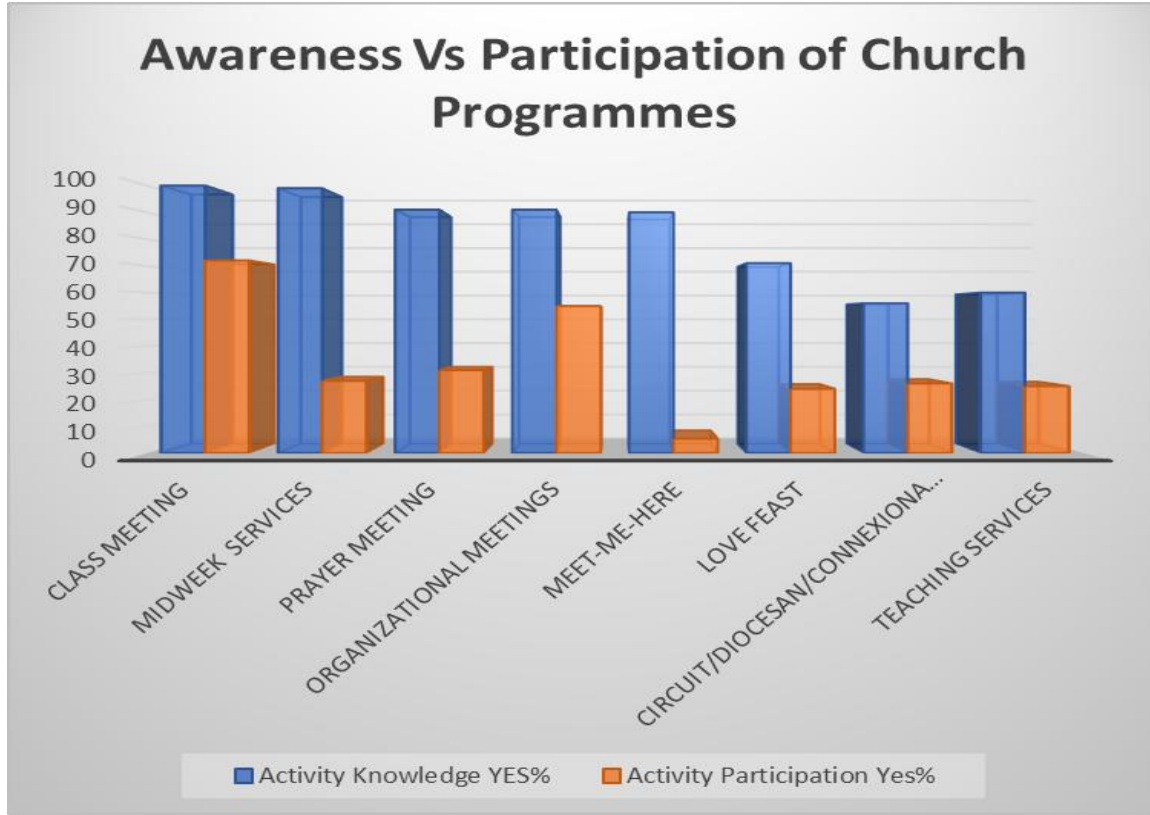


Table 4: Activities/Programmes

No	Activity	Knowledge & Participation in Church Programmes & Activities	
		Knowledge YES%	Participate Yes%
1	Class Meeting	100	72
2	Midweek/Evening Services	99	27
3	Weekly Prayer Meeting	91	31
4	Organizational Meetings	91	55

5	Meet-Me-Here	90	5.4
6	Love Feast	71	24
7	Circuit/Diocesan/Connexional Prog.	56	26
8	Special Quarterly Teaching Services	60	25

1.6.5 Significance of Church Programmes and Activities

The significance attached to the various church activities and programmes are as summarized in Table 6 below. Regarding the level of importance of church programmes to members, the study revealed the importance church members attach to the Sunday Divine Service over and above other programmes and activities. The study also showed that members' interest in non-religious social gatherings was very minimal.

1.6.5 Table 5: Significance of Church Programmes and Activities

Activity/Programme	Vital & Very Important (%)	Considerably Important (%)	Less important (%)	Total 100%
Sunday Divine Service	92	3	5	100
Bible Class Meetings	87	9	4	
Weekly Prayer Meeting	73	16	11	
Midweek/Evening Service	53	30	17	
Organization Meetings	72	17	11	

Social Activities	36	12	52	
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Perceived Importance of Church Programmes and activities

Figure 8 indicates that even though 87% of the members perceived Bible class meeting as important participation in class meeting had not been consistent among them. Midweek and Evening programmes and social activities were perceived to be least important

Figure 8: Perceived Importance of Church Programmes and Activities

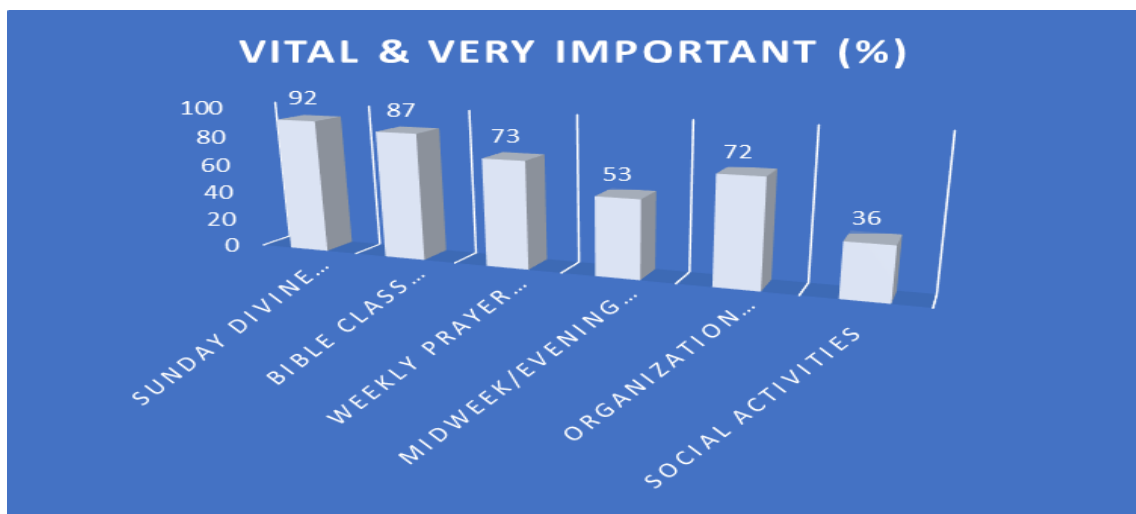
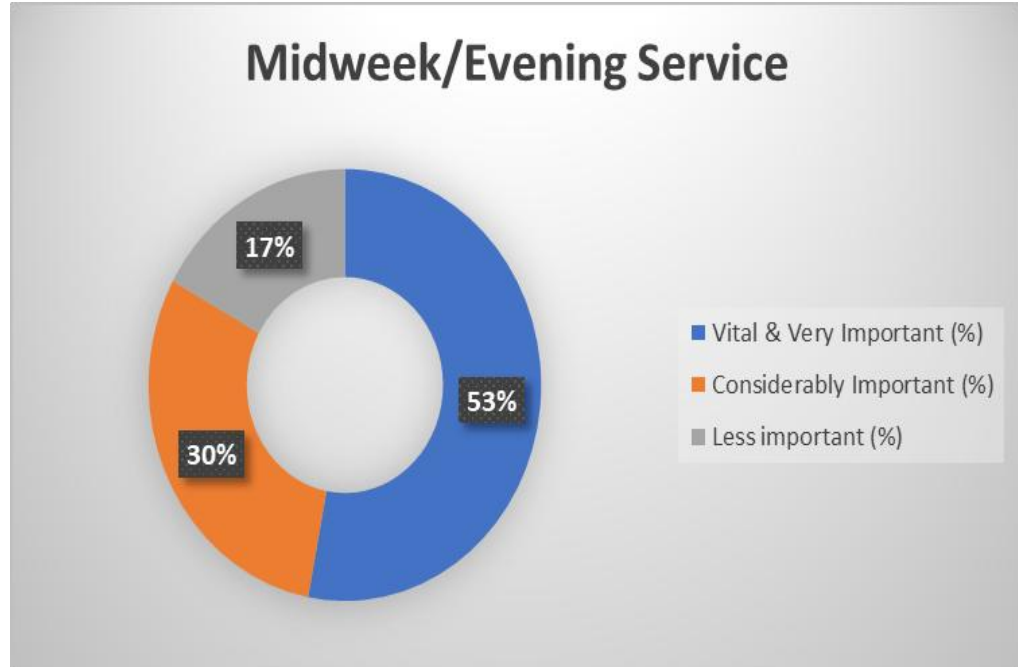


Figure 9 Importance of Midweek Programme



4.6.6 Bible Class Meeting Attendance

On class attendance, 289 (45.4%) of the respondents (including lay leaders) said they attend class meeting every week, while 167 (26.3%) attend two to three times in a month; 107 (16.8%) of the respondents indicated that they attend class meeting once a month with 11.5% never attended Bible Class at all. With respect to the year 2016, thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents indicated that they attended class meetings over 60% of the meeting times; 26% attended class between 40% and 59% of meeting times in 2016 and 73 (11%) did not attend class meeting at all. See Table 7 below.

Table 6: **Bible Class Meeting Attendance**

Class Attendance in 2016		
	Frequency	Percent (%)
not at all	73	11
less than 25% of meeting times	106	17
26-39%	95	13
40 - 59%	168	26
60% and over	208	33
Total	650	100

Figure 10: Bible Class Participation

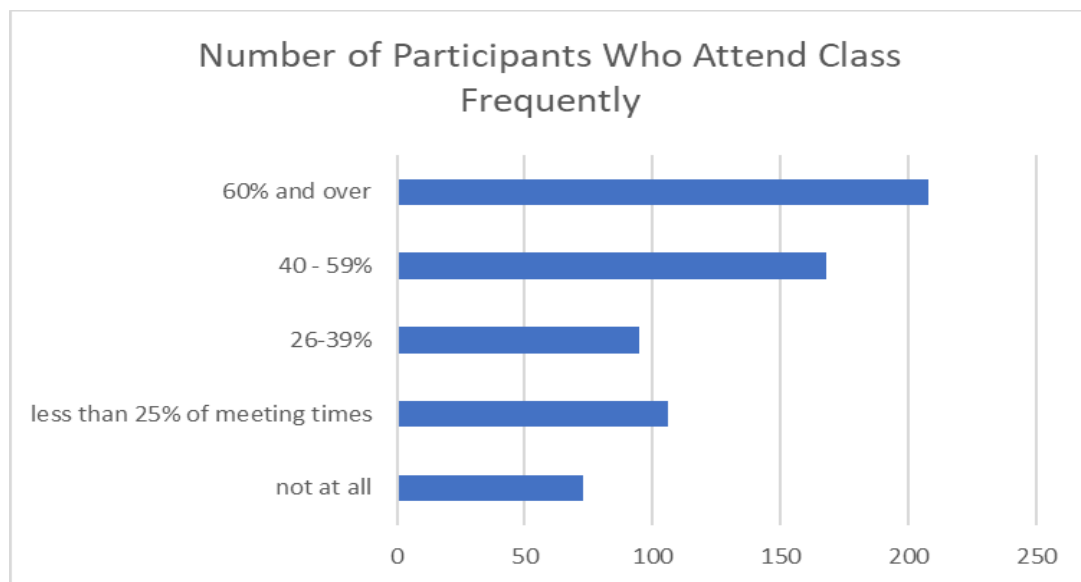
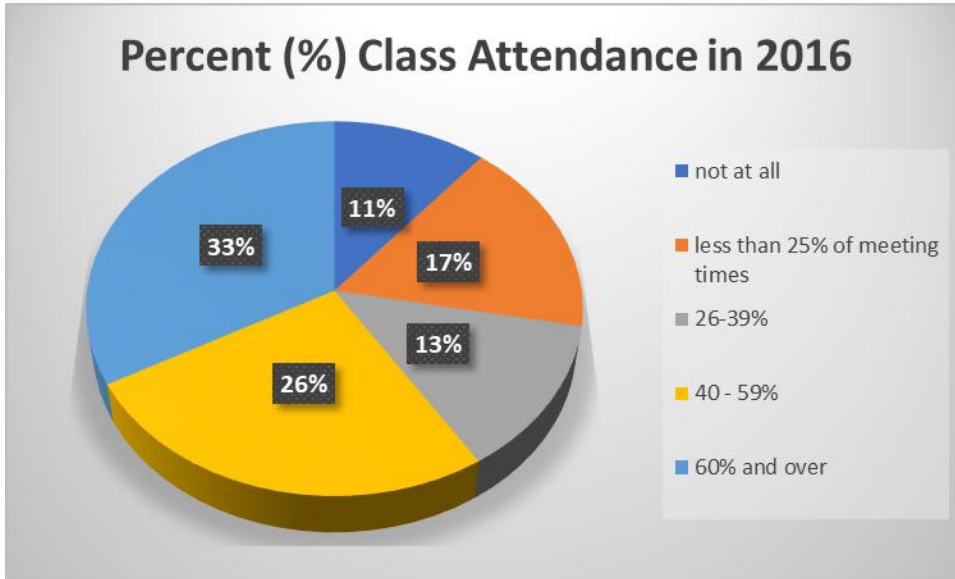


Figure 11: Bible Class Attendance



4.6.6.1 Motivation for Bible Class Meeting Attendance

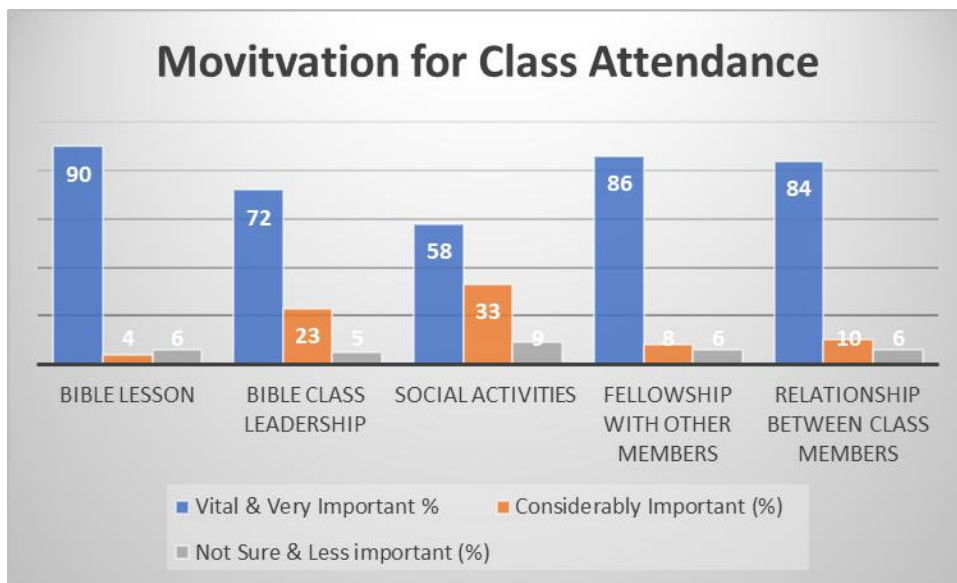
From Table 8 below the Bible Lesson discussed at Class Meeting was the main motivation for Bible Class attendance. Relationship between Class Members, Fellowship with members, Class Leadership and Social Activities were ranked as very important or important.

Table 7

Activity	Vital & Very Important %	Considerably Important (%)	Not Sure & Less important (%)
Bible Lesson	90	4	6
Bible Class Leadership	72	23	5
Social Activities	58	33	9

Fellowship with other members	86	8	6
Relationship between Class members	84	10	6

Figure 12



4.6.6.2 Benefits of the Bible Class Meeting

On benefits of class attendance, the respondents expressed varying opinions on various benefits as outlined in Table 9 below. The questions were socially desirable and so the responses were reversed.

Table 8

Benefit	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Somewhat Agree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree%
My class leader knows the Bible and explains issues very well	47	39	9	3	2
My leader allows any question and carefully explains issues critical to me	41	44	11	2	2
My ideas are respected by class members	27	49	18	3	2
Participation in the class meetings has helped me in my spiritual growth	42	41	10	4	3
My presence at the class meeting offered me the opportunity to interact with other Church members	29	49	14	5	3
I consider my participation in the class meeting to be good	20	60	14	4	2
I just enjoy attending Bible class meetings	19	45	22	9	5
The interactions give me a sense of belonging	21	56	17	4	2

The interactions have deepened my class involvement	12	55	25	5	3
The class attendance has deepened my church involvement	18	45	28	6	3
The class attendance helps meet my spiritual needs	27	43	21	5	4
The class meetings offered me opportunity to share/discuss my concerns/problems with my class members and leader	21	42	25	8	4
Members' participation in class activities is increasing	31	23	20	14	12
Class attendance is very good	22	31	24	18	5
I hate to miss class meetings	18	20	24	22	16

4.6.7 Pastors Participation in Bible Class Meetings

The study showed that visits to the class meetings by pastors were very infrequent (See Table 10 below). Only 36% of the respondents said that their pastors visited their class meetings half or more than half the meeting times. In the opinion of the remaining 64%, their pastors either did not visit the class or did so less than half the meeting times. The respondents showed varying opinions on the degree to which their pastors' presence influenced their class attendance. The questions were socially desirable and so the responses were reversed.

Table 9

Effect of Minister's Presence	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Somewhat Agree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Encouraged me to attend Class Meetings	25	36	16	15	8
Pastor's participation in the Class Meeting clarified certain key issues in the Bible	22	42	17	14	5
Pastor's participation in the Class Meeting made impact on my spiritual growth	23	42	17	14	4
Pastor's presence at the Class Meeting offered me opportunity to interact with him/her	25	39	21	9	6
My pastor understands the needs of class/church members	21	39	19	16	5
I consider my pastor's participation in the class meeting as desirable	24	44	18%)	9	5
Pastor's participation has deepened my church	27	40	22	6	5

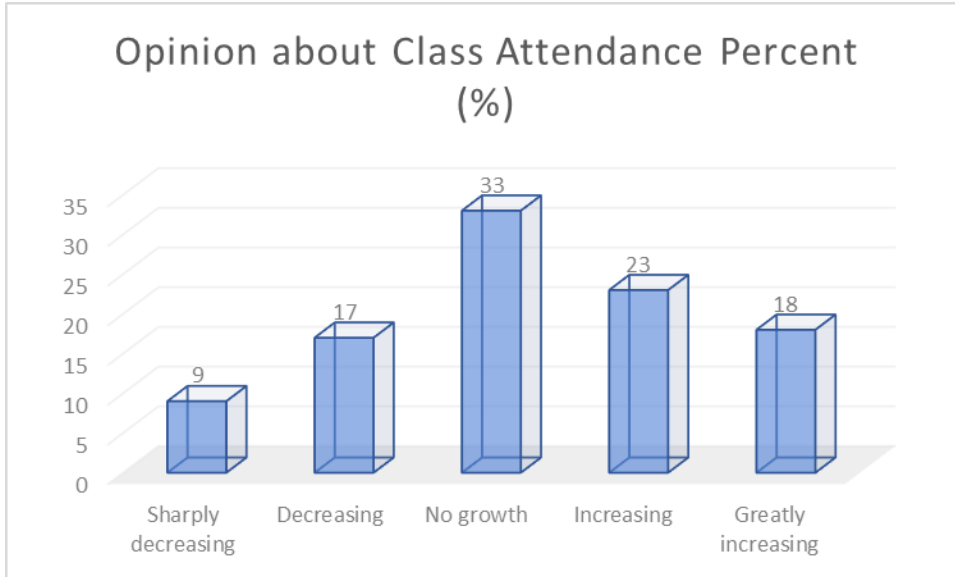
involvement					
Pastor's participation helped meet my spiritual needs	26	34	25	9	6
The class meeting offered me opportunity to share/discuss my concerns/problems with my pastor	37	8	18	35	32

In the opinion of 41% of the respondents the class attendance was either increasing or greatly increasing. However, 33% of the respondents claim attendance has been static while 26% think the numbers were either decreasing or had sharply decreased (See Table 10 below).

Table 10

Opinion about Class Attendance		
	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sharply decreasing	42	9
Decreasing	82	17
No growth	157	33
Increasing	109	23
Greatly increasing	85	18

Figure 13: *Opinion about Class Attendance*



4.5.2.2 The discipleship styles employed by the church and class leader

4.5.2.3 Pastors discipleship styles and interactions

4.5.2.4 Interactions with pastors

According to 64% of the respondents, they had several or some opportunities to interact with their pastors beside the class meetings. Among the respondents who had had interaction with their minister/pastor only 43% had any interaction with their pastor on any personal issues.

63% of the respondents considered the interaction with their pastor on personal issues as very helpful or helpful to their spiritual growth, only 10% saw it as not helpful; the remaining others were not sure or perceived the interaction as less helpful.

Again, in the opinion of 42% of the respondents their pastors had planned schedule to meet them, either as individuals or a group to monitor their spiritual growth; 29% of the respondents were not sure that their pastors had planned schedules to meet members. The remaining 29% did not know.

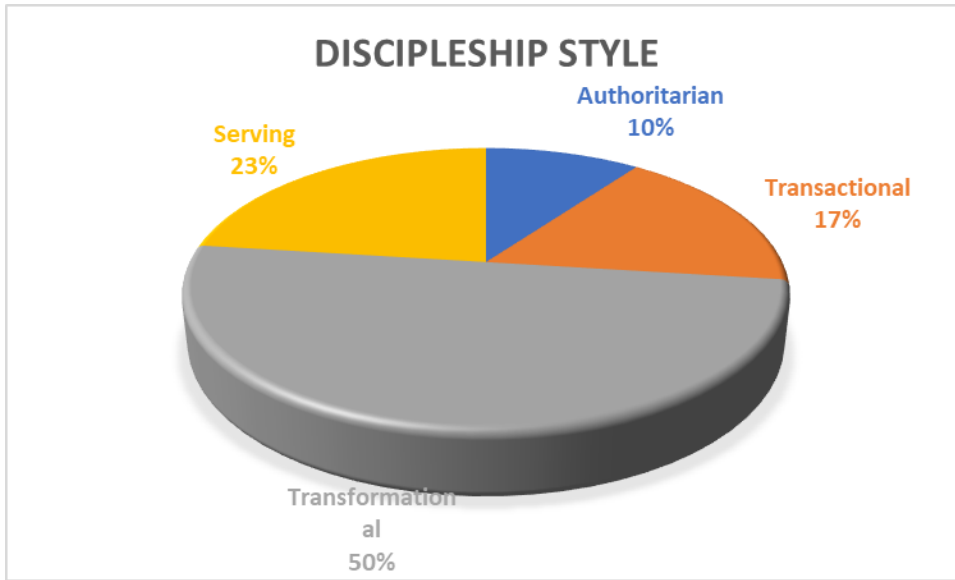
4.5.2.5 Members Perception of Pastors and Leaders Discipleship Styles

The majority, 50% of the church members indicated that their pastors and class leaders employed interpersonal (transformational) styles to disciple them, while 23% see their pastors and class leaders as employing serving style. Confrontational style was least employed. Refer to Table 11 for the details.

Table 11: Discipleship Styles

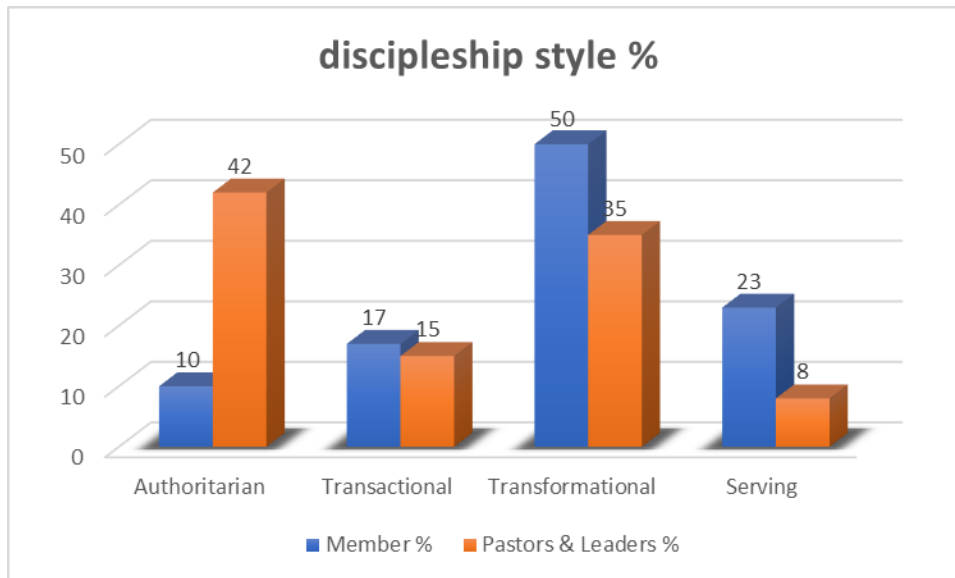
Discipleship Styles		
Style	Member %	Pastors & Leaders %
Authoritarian	10	42
Transactional	17	15
Transformational	50	35
Serving	23	8
Total	100	100

Figure 15: Perceived Leadership Style employed for discipleship



However, the findings from the pastors and leaders themselves revealed that authoritarian, transactional, and invitational styles were their preferred styles over interpersonal (transformational) and serving styles of discipleship. See Table 12 above and Figure 15 below. The pastors and leaders tended to employ strong personality styles in their bid to win more souls.

Figure 16: Leadership Styles as Perceived by Pastors and Leaders



4.5.3 THE STATISTICAL TEST FINDINGS

This study was in two phases and combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the involvement of pastors and lay leaders in the Bible Class meeting and to ascertain how such relational involvement influences or promotes church growth.

The section reports on the results from the statistical tests of the findings from the qualitative that explored the participants experiences and perspectives on the pastor and leaders' involvement in the Bible class meeting as well as the use of small group meeting to disciple church members. The test determined the extent to which the pastors and lay leaders' relationship and involvement in the class or small group meetings are desired by members of the church. It also ascertained the extent to which the pastors and lay leaders' relational involvement in the class or small group meeting influences church growth.

This was done by statistically testing whether those who more strongly endorse the pastors and lay leaders' relationship and involvement in the class or small group meetings are more

likely to show commitment to church programmes and activities as well as participant in those programmes. The relationship between the pastors and lay leaders' relational involvement in the class or small group meeting and influences church growth was also tested statistically.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and linear regression analyses were used to statistically test and to estimate the relationships between the variables of interest.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient or Pearson correlation coefficient is a bivariate correlation that measures of the strength of a linear association between two variables and is denoted by r to indicates how far away all these data points are to this line of best fit. That is, how well the data points fit this new model/line of best fit (Freedman, 2009 & Pearson, 1895). In statistical modelling, regression analysis is a set of statistical processes for estimating the relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The most common form of regression analysis is linear regression, in which a researcher finds the line that most closely fits the data according to a specific mathematical criterion (Pearson, 1895). Regression analysis is primarily used for two conceptually distinct purposes. Both statistical tests have a value between +1 and -1. A value of +1 is total positive linear correlation, 0 is no linear correlation, and -1 is total negative linear correlation (Freedman, 2009 & Pearson, 1895).

4.5.3.1 HYPOTHESES TESTING

Four (4) Hypotheses were tested using the two models mentioned above. Multiple Linear Regression and Pearson's Product Moment Correlations revealed the following:

HYPOTHESIS I: Knowledge about *Church Activities* was positively linked to *Membership Participation* ($r = .680, p < .001$). Thus, the more members know about Church activities, the greater their participation in those activities. Members who found Bible Class meetings beneficial were also more likely to participate in main Church programmes and activities ($r = .268, p < .001$).

HYPOTHESIS II: *Pastors who utilize the Bible Class or Small Group to build relationships with their members will have greater numbers of members attending small group meetings.*

The Pearson's Product Moment Correlations confirmed the hypothesis that pastors who utilized the Bible Class or Small Group to build relationships with their members had greater numbers of members attending small group meetings ($r = .457, p < .001$). In addition, pastors' involvement makes the church members perceive class meeting as beneficial ($r = .202, p = .001$).

HYPOTHESIS III: *The extent to which pastors and church leaders directly get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth will determine the level of church members' interest in activities and commitment to the church.*

The study revealed that pastors and church leadership direct get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to discipling them as well monitor their spiritual growth was positively associated with church members' interest in activities and commitment to the

church ($R = .397, p < .001$). Pastor' involvement in individual affairs was also associated with greater perceived helpfulness by the individual ($r = .112, p = .004$); and church leadership participation in church activities was positively linked to the church members participation in the church's activities and programmes ($r = .654, p < .001$).

The above signify that when pastors and lay leaders of the church show interest in the members of their church, the members were more likely to show commitments to the church and participate in the church's programmes and activities. The members perceive the pastors as helpful. Also, the more the pastors and lay leaders participate in the church's programmes and activities the greater the participation of the members in the programmes and activities of the church.

HYPOTHESIS IV: Leadership style and governance system employed to influence congregational (church) culture will have impact on the growth of members in terms of their number (increased membership) and spirituality and commitment (*class meeting, midweek service and Sunday church attendance*). There was no association between discipleship styles (Confrontational, Intellectual, Invitational, Testimonial and Serving) and Bible Class meetings and Church attendance. However, Interpersonal Style of discipleship was positively associated with knowledge about church activities ($r = .152, p = .046$).

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Class meetings and other small groups in the church have been used for discipleship and church growth from the inception of Methodist Church Ghana with very good results and outcomes. However, there has been consistent decline of class meeting which has significantly affected the growth of the church for more than five consecutive years. Although divine church services at the Society levels attendance have been consistently high Bible Class Meeting attendance has declined significantly over the years in the Accra diocese. The average church service attendance at the Society level was seventy nine percent (79%), however attendance at Bible Class Meeting was thirty nine percent (39%). To establish the causes of the problem and the mitigating factors, this study employed the mixed method research approach that combined qualitative (Focus Groups) and quantitative (structured questionnaires) research methodologies to determine the multiple perspectives associated with the problem as well as tested the findings statistically. Three hypotheses were tested:

The first hypothesis that also answered the first two research question was to determine the relationship between knowledge and perceived benefit of class meeting and participation and attendance. The study confirmed the hypothesis that the more church members know about church activities and programmes, the greater their participation. The members were also more likely to participate in the programme when they perceive the activity as useful.

The study also confirmed that small groups, in this case class meetings are effective means of building relationships, disciple Christians effectively and to grow a church. Leaders who effectively utilize Small Group to build relationships with their members have greater numbers of members attending their meetings and programmes (Comiskey, 2000; Morgan, 2014). The above cannot be achieved without direct involvement by pastors and leaders in programmes to set examples for their members. When they get involved they are perceived by their members as better leaders and role models. The extent to which pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of their members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth determine the level of church members' interest in activities and commitment to the church (Morgan, 2014).

The second hypothesis indicates that the extent to which pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of members with the view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth will determine the level of church members' interest in activities and commitment to the church. Members were aware of the structural arrangements put in place to support the leadership in the discipleship making. However, the leaders did not utilize the structures to deepen relationships with members and to intentionally disciple them. Though pastors and leaders' involvement in the affairs of individual members was also associated with greater perceived helpfulness by the individuals. Also, Church leadership's participation in church activities was positively linked to membership participation in church activities and programmes. The findings supported Virgil (2012) relational discipleship assertion that there is the need for leadership to get involved in the affairs of their members

and using the word of God as an indispensable tool, guide them in the disciple making process. Yet the leaders did not utilize the opportunity the class system offered them. Though the leaders were appointed lay men and women and not elected; and had no significant qualifications except to be able to read and write the primary qualification of faithfulness was not adhered to before being appointed and trained as leaders. Therefore, their moral and spiritual character was not recognised; they could not be described as leaders or not leaders (Morgan, 2014:4). Also thought the Class leaders were entrusted with visiting each member of their class in the member's home this was also not carried out for a number of reasons (Hunter 1987). They were thus unable to give an account of each member of the class to either the Leaders Meeting or the pastor in - charge of the society (Comiskey, 2000; Morgan, 2014).

Third hypothesis also support others studies and literature (for example, Drurey, 2017; Hardt, 2000; Henderson, 1997 & 2010; Warren, 1995) that suggest that small group are definitely the vehicle for disciple making and for church growth as they train members to think in new ways as well as gives them new skills. However, the leaders may have to stick to the rules to the letter and probably use leadership style that will yield the expected results. Bible Class as a small group tool for discipleship and church growth by Methodist Church Ghana has currently failed and still failing to meet the expected outcome because they have deviated from their original course and heritage as found by Crisp (2010), Essamuah (2004 & 2010); Foli, (1995) and Kpobi (2008). The study has revealed that the church leadership are not paying the needed attention to this lapse and or may not actually know and understand exactly the contributory factors.

The study also found support for the utilization of the Bible class or small group to build relationships with their members will have greater number of their members attending small group meetings. The class meeting has been provided as a structural arrangement in the church to help the leadership have a forum for interacting with their members. Various views have been expressed to underscore the importance of the small group or class meeting, which is expected to be utilized by leaders for the discipleship of their members. In the opinion of Earley and Gutierrez (2010) since Jesus Christ utilized the small group for his ministry, it makes it a recommended practice for developing and building up believers for ministry. Rainer (2001:118) also share the same view, saying, relevant preaching creates attendees and members but small groups retain members and foster discipleship. Interestingly, the majority of the respondents (90%) agreed and considered Bible lessons as their main motivation for attending class meeting. What that even though members cherish the interest their leaders show in their affairs, they will cherish it even more if they could be helped to understand the Bible lessons very well. Leaders would therefore do well to make themselves available to their members and teach them to grow in their knowledge of the word of God. Similar conclusions are drawn by Clinton and Hawkins (2011:147) who allude to discipleship as the goal of Christian relationship and that this relationship can shape a crucible for spiritual transformation. According to them, building a working relationship with members provides an opportunity for the leaders to guide and nurture their members in the spiritual growth process. Camp (2008:19) equally views discipleship as the Christ presence in Christianity. He states that Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

The study also supports Obeng Adjei (2013) exploration on disciples making as Matthew 28:18-20 applies to the Methodist Church Ghana Bible Class System; and Painstil's (2008) study on the use of Weekly Bible Lessons for leadership religiosity and knowledge of the bible that impacted positively on the Spiritual Growth of the members of Methodist Church Ghana. The studies also illustrated the importance of organizing God's people into small groups. The studies though contributed to the understanding and benefit of the using Bible Class for discipleship and church growth, they were simple descriptive rather than directly explore the issues related to Bible Class Meeting. They did not adequately explore the various perspectives and dimensions of the challenges associated with the implementation on the Class System in modern times. The evidence presented did not sufficiently explain the cause of the poor growth in membership. The studies attempted to systematically explore the possible causes of the low Bible Class attendance; a Class system which had previously been to main driver for discipleship and church growth. This study found that Class meeting engenders relational discipleship as it creates an environment, which promotes loving relationships among the gathered community and which offers them opportunities to learn from each other. In this regard, the pastor and church leadership have a major role to play in creating such environment. It also allows the members to be committed and to grow into spiritual maturity and that enables them to also make disciple.

The fourth hypothesis that leadership discipleship styles was associated with the growth of members in terms of their number, spirituality and commitment was partially supported. Leadership's discipleship style associated with the growth of members in terms of their number, spirituality and commitment was determined as transformational. Even though most

of the pastors preferred style of leadership was authoritarian they employed transformational style of leadership. Transformational style which was found to be significantly employed by the leaders was akin to democratic leadership style and tends to centre on the followers and is an effective approach when trying to maintain relationships with others (Bass & Bass, 2008). The leaders tended to get along well with the members, support them and consulted them when making decisions; but that did not translate into commitment and church growth. It was only when the leaders participated fully in the meetings and programmes of the church that the membership increased. Perhaps as Bass and Bass (2008) reported the pastors and leaders instinctively know that at authoritarian leadership though often presented solely in negative and disapproving terms results in better outcomes. Interpersonal / transformational style of discipleship was positively associated with knowledge about church activities. The more members had knowledge and found Bible class meeting beneficial, the more their likelihood of participating in the class meeting. The interpersonal styles also afforded the church members the opportunity to discuss their concerns with their leaders, and eventually had beneficial impact on the members and therefore stirred up their interest and participation in the class meeting. It is possible that the interpersonal style of discipleship produced more interaction between leaders and their members and thereby helped inform member or reinforce the necessity of participation in church programmes and activities.

Authoritarian leadership style was the preferred style of the pastors. Authoritarian leaders though often described as controlling and close-minded can be effective and beneficial in cases where followers need a great deal of direction and where rules and standards must be followed to the letter. Another often overlooked benefit of the authoritarian style is the ability

to maintain a sense of order. The leaders could not assert themselves when some of the leaders were not committed and did not participate in the churches programmes. This is evidenced by the findings in the qualitative research that found that some of the leaders appeared not to care and were selective in their choice of programmes to participate in. This is also against John Wesley's expectations of leadership as pointed out by Crisp (2010) and Henderson (2016).

Crisp (2015) suggested that modern lifestyle and way of life may not be consistent with eighteenth century approach to discipleship. This has not been consistent with the findings of this study. As Hardt (2000) indicated this is possible; and as some Ghanaian Methodist pastors (e.g. Painstil 2008; Obeng Adjei 2013) attempted to unravel. The study is also consistent with Nsengimana's (2014) research on using a small group to increase church growth in the Gikondo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda. He found that a small group ministry is probably the best tool for reaching the people.

Relational discipleship is believed to hold a great potential for church growth. Discipleship has always been relational. God is relational. He was and continues to be in relationship with the Son and the Spirit and with man. Jesus' ministry was relational. Jesus shows us the best method of discipleship possible and it was a method based in relationships. Jesus modelled the relational discipleship style for us to emulate. Discipleship requires a person to integrate their growing understanding of God, through Christ into their whole lives. Jesus lived with His disciples for three years and taught them essential life lessons as a group. After three years, he commanded them to "go and do likewise" (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus disciplined His

followers through relationships and He wants us to do the same. Jesus has personal relationship with the disciples and intimate Peter, James, and John. Jesus disciplined these men to be the primary leaders of his church. Jesus also had a social relationship with the seventy-two (72) that he commissioned and sent out (Luke 10: 1-4); and was in regular social relationships with people like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus taught the crowds the Word of God and even fed them. He had compassion for them (a form of relationship) with the crowds that followed and pursued him.

Relational Discipleship helps believers grow in their relationships with God and others. As stated by Brian Craig Drurey (2017) in his book, *Relational Discipleship: Moving Back Home with God*. God is waiting for each of us to return home. He is already out in the world searching and inviting each person to take the journey back to God's as true disciples who are also discipling others to expand the kingdom of God.

5.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study examined the structural arrangements that are in place to help pastors and leaders foster relational discipleship towards church growth; and the utilization of such structures by the leadership to promote relational discipleship. The study also explored the leadership and discipleship styles employed by the leadership in pursuance of church growth. The findings of the research suggest that pastors and church leadership directly get involved in the affairs of their members, with a view to making disciples and monitoring their spiritual growth influences church members' interest in church activities and commitment.

Similarly, the utilization of the Bible class or small group to build relationships with church members had greater numbers of members attending small group meetings; and that pastors' involvement makes the church members perceive class meeting as beneficial. Leadership participation in church activities encourages members' participation in church activities and programmes. However, apart from interpersonal style, other discipleship styles such as serving, testimonial, intellectual employed by pastors and church leaders are not as beneficial in discipleship making. The need for church members to know about Church activities engendering their greater participation in those activities cannot be over emphasised.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The journey through the study into the relational discipleship of church members has brought to the fore certain factors that may contribute to church growth. These factors include the following:

a) The Leadership involvement factor

It emerged that members cherish leaders who make themselves available to them and get involved in their affairs. The premium placed on leadership's involvement cannot be taken for granted. Possibly, it is for this reason that the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Methodist Church Ghana requires the class leader "to meet the members of his/her class weekly and visit those who are sick or in trouble."¹⁰⁵ What challenge does this pose to leadership? First, it calls for the church to ensure that people it appoints as leaders actually make themselves available to the flock they lead. Leaders must be people-oriented and have strong passion for people development. Also, there must be structures put in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of the leaders.

b) Bible Class Meeting Content factor

Bible studies emerged strongly as a motivating factor for members' attendance at class meetings. This shows that church members are looking for knowledge and deeper understanding of the biblical truths. Discoveries from the empirical research suggest that church members have yawning questions they wish to have answers to. Applying Bible studies to the spiritual development of members would require leaders who are knowledgeable and understand the Bible very well. It is therefore highly recommended that the church should consider the training of leaders who will be able to teach the word of God thoroughly and as practical as possible. Perhaps it will be necessary to conduct further studies into the attention paid to the teaching ministry of the church, with particular reference to the human resource available to strengthen it (the teaching ministry). Another issue worth investigating is the question of whether all leaders have the gift of teaching and if not, what

¹⁰⁵The Constitution and Standing Orders of The Methodist Church Ghana, 2000 Revised Edition. S.O. 725 (1)b.

arrangement should the church make to ensure that class members receive the requisite teachings. It is believed that when the Bible studies are made attractive and members patronize the class meetings, it would provide an opportunity to foster members' relationships with God and also with other members and thus deepen their participation, not only in the class meeting but also in other church programmes.

c) Leadership example factor

Another lesson that came up from the study was that when members see their leaders participating in church programmes, they feel motivated and encouraged to also attend such programmes. Of course, the leaders' participation per se' will not translate into automatic attendance by members unless the contents of the programmes are sufficiently attractive and beneficial.

Finally, I conclude by acknowledging that the subject of relational discipleship carries some complexities which cut across people's attitudes, tastes/desires, socio-economic conditions that affect the individual, and even the individuals' emotional and psychological responses to situations. I have been amazed by the amount of work that has been done in the area of relational discipleship by various researchers and still having a yawning gap on issues that need to be addressed in firmly establishing relational discipleship as a factor of church growth. Some of the recommendations indicated above can help in mainstreaming relational discipleship as a major human resource activity in the church, especially focusing on people development through relationships and the effective utilization of the class meeting or small groups as powerful discipleship tools.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Ministers and Leaders Questionnaire

FOR MINISTERS & LEADERS DISCIPLESHIP STRUCTURES QUESTIONNAIRE

CODE NO:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research focusing on discipleship using small groups in pursuance of church growth.

The goal of this survey is to determine trends and practices and the effectiveness within the Methodist Church Ghana regarding discipleship and teaching in our churches. Please, you will be asked some personal and sensitive questions. The research has a strong safeguard for confidentiality, so please we will appreciate your honest answers! There is no record of your name on this questionnaire so there is no way that your answers can be traced back to you. When answering the questions, keep in mind that we are collecting information for the purpose of better helping the Pastors and leaders of the church to fulfill God's call to make disciples.

There is a code number at the top of this questionnaire. If you change your mind and do not want us to use your answers in the research, please contact The Reverend Eric Asante-Danquah on phone number 0244979752 within 48 hours; give him this code number and he will destroy the questionnaire you have completed.

Please answer all questions. Sometimes you may not be sure about your answer. Just choose the answer that is closest to what you think.

SECTION A: ABOUT YOURSELF

Age: _____ years

Sex: Male Female

Ethnicity: Akan Ga and Dangme Ewe Guan Bole Dagomba
 Other (please say what) _____

Marital status: single married divorced/separated widow/widower

Number of children _____

How many years have you been a minister?

How many stations have you served?

SECTION B: DICIPLESHIP STRUCTURES

1. How many Bible Classes does your congregation have?
2. How many class leaders do you have?
3. What percentage of the classes are manned by trained leaders?

80 – 100% 60 – 79% 50 – 59% 30 -49% Less than 30%

4. What percentage of the classes did you visit for more than 10 times during the past year? 80 – 100% 60 – 79% 50 – 59% 30 -49% Less than 30%
5. Do you have any monitoring mechanism to ensure that the class leaders are running their classes according to how you want it done? Yes No Not sure
6. Apart from the class meeting and normal divine service, do you have any other opportunity to interact with church members? Yes No
7. What percentage of homes did you visit to minister and to strengthen the members in need (those that came to your notice)?
- 80 – 100 % 60 – 79% 50 – 59% 30 -49% Less than 30%
8. Do you have a planned schedule to meet individuals or groups in your church to monitor their spiritual growth? Yes No Not Yet
9. How satisfied are you with the level of discipleship occurring in your local church? (Choose one)
- Very satisfied Satisfied Somewhat satisfied/fair
 Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied
10. How do you measure your effectiveness at making disciples (class meeting and divine Service attendance: growth = discipleship)? **Please tick (√) all that apply to you.**
1. I preach and let the Holy Spirit take care of the rest
 2. By the testimonies I hear
 3. I look for increased growth of the Fruit of the Spirit
 4. Demand for discipleship classes and become full members
 5. Number of new members who come to church on Sundays
 6. Weekly statistics on attendance
 7. I'm not sure how to measure it!
11. What is the primary source of discipleship in your local church/society? **Please tick (√) all that apply to you.**
1. Pulpit preaching during Sunday service
 2. Bible class meetings
 3. Small Groups meeting for prayers during the week (e.g. Prayer warriors, cell groups)
 4. Organizational meetings (youth, children's, Women's fellowship etc)
 5. One-on-one discipleship
 6. Mid-week evening service

7. Mid-week Prayer meeting
8. Circuit and diocesan activity
9. Other (TV, other media programs, etc.)
12. Does your society have an intentional programme for discipling new believers?
 Yes No Don't Know
13. If yes, how would you grade its effectiveness? (Choose one)
 Very effective Effective Somewhat effective Ineffective
 Very ineffective Not Applicable
14. Does your congregation offer an "Introduction to Membership" course? Yes No
15. If yes, which of these discipleship methods do you feel is most effective?
 Not Applicable
 Preaching
 Teaching
 Small Group
16. What do you consider to be the main challenge in moving your church forward in discipleship?
 Lack of relationships
 Lack of Biblical knowledge/teaching
 Lack of application of preaching/ bible lessons
 Lack of commitment on the part of members
 Lack of intentionality on the part of leaders and ministers (church leadership)
 Lack of holiness focus and
 Lack of attention for members
17. What area(s) of discipleship do you feel needs to be more clearly addressed?
 Relevant resources
 Daily spiritual resources
 Spiritual applications
 More intentional teaching of doctrine
 Opportunity for discussion and deeper questions (Small group engagement)
 Re-thinking how we do discipleship altogether

The End

Thanks for completing this survey! We appreciate your cooperation.
MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU.

Appendix B: Church Members Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Members

CODE NO:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. It is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of the issues that affect participation in church programmes and activities and how those activities result in church growth.

You will be asked some personal and sensitive questions. Please answer these honestly.

The confidentiality of your answers is guaranteed. Your identity will not be disclosed to anyone else. There is no record of your name on this questionnaire so there is no way that your answers can be traced back to you.

There is a code number at the top of this questionnaire. If you change your mind and do not want us to use your answers in the research, please contact The Reverend Eric Asante-Danquah on phone number 0244979752 within 48 hours; give him this code number and he will destroy the questionnaire you have completed.

Please give honest answers and answer all questions. Tell us what you really think. Sometimes you may not be sure about your answer. Just choose the answer that is closest to what you think.

Answer the questions with a tick (√).

SECTION A: ABOUT YOURSELF

Age: _____ years

Marital status: single married divorced/separated Widowed

Sex: Male Female

Ethnicity: Akan Ga and Dangme Ewe Guan Bole Dagomba
 Other (please say what) _____

SECTION B: YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES

1. Christian Denomination: Methodist Other

2. Do you belong to a Bible class? Yes No

3. What category of member are you? Catechumen Adherent Full member

4. Do you belong to any of the church's organizations? Yes No

5. Which church organization do you belong to?

The Choir / other Sing group

Singing Band

Christ Little Band

Women's/Men's/Youth Fellowship/ Susanna Wesley (SUWMA)/Guild

6. Are you on any church committee? Yes No

7. Which activities/programmes does your church organize? **Tick** all that apply to you:

- Class meetings
- Midweek/evening service
- Weekly prayer meetings
- Meet-me-here.
- Love feast
- Circuit/Diocese/Connexional Programmes
- Special Weekly Teaching Services

8. Which of these activities/programmes do you attend most of the time? Tick all that apply to you:

- Class meetings
- Midweek/evening service
- Weekly prayer meeting
- Organizational meetings
- Meet-me-here.
- Love feast and other social programmes
- Circuit/Diocese/Connexional Programmes
- Special Weekly Teaching Services

9. Rank the items below in order of their importance to you on a scale of 1 – 6 (6 being the highest and 1 the lowest mark):

- 1. Normal Sunday Divine Service _____
- 2. Bible Class Meetings _____
- 3. Weekly prayer meeting _____
- 4. Midweek evening Service _____
- 5. Organizational Meetings _____
- 6. Social gatherings (e.g. meet-me-here) _____

10. How often do you attend class meeting?

- not at all once a month twice a month
- three times a month Every week

11. How many times did you attend class meeting in the past one year?

- Not at all
- Less than 25% of meeting times
- 26 to 39% of meeting times
- 40 to 59% of meeting times
- 60% and above of meeting times

12. What do you think about Bible class attendance?

- The numbers are greatly increasing The numbers are increasing

- The numbers are sharply decreasing The numbers are decreasing
 There is no growth in the number of people attending bible classes.

13. Which of the following motivate you to attend Bible class the most? Please, rank them in order of their importance to you on a scale of 1 – 6 (6 being the highest and 1 the lowest mark):

- The Bible lessons Fellowship with other members
 The class leadership The relationship between class members
 The social activities None of the above/Not sure

14. Benefits of class meeting attendance. I attend Bible class because of the following reasons:

Item	Strongly Agree ()	Agree ()	Somewhat Agree ()	Disagree ()	Strongly Disagree ()
My class leader knows the Bible and explains issues very well					
My leader allows any question and carefully explains issues critical to me					
My ideas are respected by class members					
Participation in the class meetings has helped me in my spiritual growth					
My presence at the class meeting offered me the opportunity to interact with other church members					
I consider my participation in the class meeting to be good					
I just enjoy attending Bible class meetings					
The interactions give me a sense of belonging					
The interactions have deepened my <u>class</u> involvement					
The class attendance has deepened my <u>church</u> involvement					

The class attendance helps meet my spiritual needs					
The class meetings offered me opportunity to share/discuss my concerns/problems with my class members and leader					
Members' participation in class activities is increasing					
Class attendance is very good					
I hate to miss class meetings (responses will be reversed)					

SECTION C: PASTOR'S INVOLVEMENT IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES:

1. How often did your Reverend Minister visit your class meeting?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Every meeting time | <input type="checkbox"/> Half the number of meeting times |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than half the number of meeting times | <input type="checkbox"/> Very rarely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know/not applicable |

2. Did your Minister's presence at the class meeting influence your class meeting attendance?

Item	Strongly Agree ()	Agree ()	Somewhat ()	Disagree ()	Strongly Disagree ()
Encouraged me to attend class meetings					
Pastor's participation in the class meeting clarified certain key issues in the Bible					
Pastor's participation in the class meetings made impact on my spiritual growth					
Pastor's presence at the class					

meeting offered me opportunity to interact with him/her					
My pastor understands the needs of class/church members					
I consider my pastor's participation in the class meeting as desirable					
Pastor's participation has deepened my church involvement					
Pastor's participation helped meet my spiritual needs					
The class meeting offered me opportunity to share/discuss my concerns/problems with my pastor					

SECTION D: LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP STYLES OF PASTORS AND CLASS LEADERS

1. What do you think of the leadership and discipleship styles employed by pastors and class leaders of your church?

- confrontational intellectual testimonial interpersonal invitational
 serving

2. Beside the class meetings, did you have the opportunity to interact with your pastor?

- Several opportunities Some opportunities Insignificant opportunities
 No opportunity at all Not sure/cannot tell

3. Did your pastor have a planned schedule to meet you as an individual or a group to monitor your spiritual growth? Yes No Not Sure/Don't know

4. Have you ever had interaction with your pastor on personal issues? Yes No

5. If yes, how do you assess the viability of such interaction in terms of helping you grow spiritually? Very helpful Helpful Less helpful Not helpful Not sure

6. What do you think about the numerical strength of your church/society?

- The numbers are greatly increasing The numbers are marginally increasing
 The numbers are sharply decreasing The numbers are marginally decreasing
 There is no growth in the number (static) Cannot tell.

7. What do you consider as the greatest positive impact on your Christian life?

Friendship/Relationships

Bible Studies

Pastoral Visits

Personal Attention from Leader/Pastor

Welfare Support

END

Please place your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and seal the envelope.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU

Appendix C: Consent Form

PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

Code Name: _____

Thesis Title: Pursuing Discipleship for Church Growth: A Practical Theological Study About the Relational Dynamics of Pastoral Leadership In Three Circuits Of The Accra Diocese Of The Methodist Church Ghana

Researcher: Rev. Eric Asante Danquah, phone: 0244979752; e-mail: danpuahe@yahoo.com

Please read and tick each item

1. I have read the information leaflet that explains this study.
2. I am over 18 years of age.
3. I understand that I will complete questionnaires about my knowledge and awareness and participation in bible class and other church programmes and activities
4. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any stage of the study.
5. I understand that, up until the point at which the study has been written up, I can request that any data collected from me should be destroyed.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix D: Approval From Church

	THE METHODIST CHURCH GHANA CONFERENCE OFFICE - WESLEY HOUSE E252/2 Liberia Road, P. O. Box 403, Accra, Ghana, W/A Telegram & Cables: "METHODIST ACCRA" Telephone Office: (233-0302) 67-9223, (233-0302) 67-0355 Fax: (233-0302) 67-9224 Email: mcghqr@yahoo.com Website: www.methodistchurch_gh.org	
The Most Reverend Prof. Emmanuel K. Asante The Presiding Bishop Office Direct - (233-0302) 67-9221	Kwame A. Boafo, Esq. The Lay President Tel: 233-208165649 / 244921328 Tel. Residence: 233-322033170 E-mail: kab52@yahoo.com	The Rt. Reverend Dr. Kwaku Asamoah-Okyere The Administrative Bishop Mob: +233205578682 E-mail: kwakuaog@gmail.com

August 17, 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

INFORMED CONSENT

This is to acknowledge receipt of a letter from the Rev. Eric Asante Danquah requesting an informed consent from The Methodist Ghana to enable him undertake a research in the Church in relation to a practical theological study about relational dynamics of pastoral leadership.

May it be known to whoever it concerns that, the Methodist Church Ghana has no objection whatsoever regarding the conduct of the said research within the Church. Rather, the Church will encourage the research as much as possible in the hope that the outcome will help her to effectively fulfill her mandate of being the mission of God to the world.

We are hopeful that this letter helps Rev. Asante-Danquah to be ethically cleared to begin his research.

Should there be a need for further explanation and or discussions relating to this issue involving the Church, please do let us know promptly.

Yours sincerely,



Very Rev. William A. Mperre-Gyekye
GENERAL DIRECTOR FOR MINISTRIES