

# DECLINING MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE IN THE TRADITIONAL MAINLINE CHURCHES IN THE WESTERN WORLD: LESSONS FOR CHRISTIANITY IN GHANA

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## **Introduction**

By all standards, people in the western world, especially Europeans, have proved themselves as a very religious people. Having broken away from their various primal religions to embrace Christianity many centuries ago, Europe has served as the centre of gravity of Christianity for over 1,000 years.

America has become what it is today because of the influx of Christians from Europe who moved there in the early 1600s in search of a place to enjoy religious freedom. Since then, churches in the West have been experiencing growing membership and attendance. They have been at the forefront in sending missionaries to other parts of the world. Through their numerous books and other literature, they have helped to shape Christian theology and practice. Similarly, through their numerous Bible Schools and seminaries, ministers of the gospel have been trained. They have also sent out billions of dollars to support Christian activities globally. Actually, without the significant roles played by Europeans and Americans, Christianity would not have been that successful. However, over the last decades, the situation appears to be changing as Europe and North America seem to be losing their Christian heritage. Church membership and attendance appear to be declining.

Arising out of this genuine concern, the leadership of The Church of Pentecost in Ghana mandated me to undertake research trips to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and the UK in July 2017 and the US in September 2017 to examine whether or not the perceived decline of membership and attendance in the traditional mainline churches in the West was real, and if so, identify the contributory factors. This was done with the view of drawing practical lessons for Christianity in Ghana.

Having reviewed relevant literature, interviewed 59 key church leaders from traditional mainline Evangelical, Catholic, Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal churches, administered and analysed 164 questionnaires, this essay presents the findings and recommendations of the research.

### **Decline in Church Membership and Attendance in the West**

Many years ago, it was considered sinful for westerners to absent themselves from church services. However, in Europe today, only two to four percent of the people attend church service regularly. The average age of church attendees in the UK is 51. It is 57 in the United Methodist Church in the US and about 56 in Holland. It is estimated that 60,000 members of the Protestant Church in Holland leave the church annually and that if the trend continues, that denomination will cease to exist by 2050.

Whereas some 930,000 Muslims attend mosques every week in the UK, the Anglican Church in that country records a total of 916,000 attendance on a weekly basis. In 2014, the Anglican Church in the UK baptised 130,000 persons, which was 12 percent lower than the 2004 figures. In 2015, it recorded 124,000 baptisms, but buried 149,000 members. Today, only 1.4 percent of the population of England attends Anglican services on Sundays. Officially, the church admits: “Over recent decades, attendance at Church of England church services has gradually fallen. These trends continued in 2015. Most key measures of attendance have fallen by between 10 percent and 15 percent over the past 10 years.” This decline is happening against the backdrop of the fact that the Anglican Church educates over one million children in their schools. This suggests that the Church schools are not impacting students with the Christian faith.

The editorial director of the Catholic Herald, Damian Thompson, asserts that because some 1.7 million people left the Anglican Church between 2012 and 2014, it is projected that Christianity in Britain will come to an end by 2067 and Anglicanism in the UK is likely to disappear by 2033 if the trend continues. After 400 years of existence, the British Mennonites closed down in March 2016.

Historically, the membership of the Methodist Church in Great Britain grew from 58,000 in 1790 to 302,000 in 1830 and reached a peak at 841,000 in 1910. By the end of 2014, it had 202,000 members in 4,650 congregations. It is now trying to merge with the Anglican Church after splitting for more than 200 years.

After 500 years of the Protestant Reformation, which started in Germany, 52 percent of the population of that country now say they do not believe in God. Whereas less than 10 percent of the population in France and Sweden attend church regularly, and only three percent of the Danish population, and 30 percent of Italian population go to church on a weekly basis. Church attendance in Ireland fell from 90 percent in 1990 to 60 percent in 2009. Only 100,000 representing two percent of the Norwegian population attend church on Sundays, making that country record the lowest church attendance in Europe. However, the Catholic Church in Norway is doing well numerically because of migrants from the Catholic-dominated Eastern European countries to that country.

Generally, church membership in Switzerland has fallen from 95 percent in 1980 to about 68 percent in 2015. In Belgium, church attendance is so low that in order to attract people to church, one local priest in the village of Brielen usually turns the church into a beer bar after Sunday service.

With about 23 percent of Catholics in the US regularly attending mass, the director of Into Thy Word Ministries, Richard J. Krejcir, points out that church membership in the US dropped by 10 percent in the 1980s and dropped again by 12 percent in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, combined Protestant denominations in the US lost some five million members. He notes that whereas over 4,000 churches close down annually in the US, only about 1,000 new ones are started. By his calculation, therefore, 38,000 new churches will have to be started annually in the US in order to catch up. Similarly, whereas in 1900 there was a ratio of 27 churches per 10,000 people in the US, by 2000, there were only 11 churches per 10,000.

Thus, church attendance and membership in the West have fallen drastically. This has led some to form “Done with church”, “Dones”, and “Believing without belonging” movements. There is even the

“Done with church, but not with God” movement, whose adherents are referred to as the “De-churched”. They contend that although they are fed up with traditional church services, they can still worship God privately and love people as the Bible teaches. They believe that because Paul taught that if you are hungry, eat at home (1 Cor. 11:34), they want to “eat at home” because the church is failing to feed them properly. They also think that because Jesus has taught that “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn. 13:35), they can qualify as true disciples of God if they worship the Lord privately from wherever they are and still demonstrate Christian love to others.

Declining church membership and attendance has resulted in pastors quitting the ministry in their numbers, seminaries closing down, Christian bookshops no longer economically viable, and church buildings being abandoned, sold out, demolished or modified for secular usage.

### **Pastors Quitting the Ministry and Seminaries Closing Down**

With dwindling church membership and attendance, some pastors in the West are quitting the ministry. According to Pastor John Waller of the Elim Pentecostal Churches, UK, about 50 percent of pastors drop out within five years of ordination. In the US, between 1,500 and 1,700 pastors leave the ministry every month. Even though pastors in Europe are not quitting the ministry at the same rate as those in the US because of the state-church system, the European churches are facing an aging priesthood. For example, the average age of Catholic priests in Ireland is 63. Generally, the Catholic Church is facing priest shortage.

Also, many seminaries in the West are closing down as many westerners do not want to spend time, energy and money to train as theologians or pastors when they are not likely to find churches to minister in. Today, it is mainly Asians, Latinos and Africans who patronise seminaries because their churches are still vibrant and are ready to engage them upon graduation.

### **Abandonment, Sale, Demolition, and Modification of Church Buildings for Secular Usage**

Whenever church buildings in the West become too expensive to maintain, church membership and attendance dwindle drastically, or a church is unable to support a priest, the church buildings are usually abandoned, sold out, demolished, or modified for secular usage.

A senior writer at BreakPoint, Shane Morris, notes that within 10 years some 515 Catholic churches have been closed down in Germany. In the projection of the German writer, Matthias Schulz, 15,000 out of about 45,000 church buildings in Germany will no longer be needed in the nearest future. Whereas over 10,000 churches have been closed down in the UK since 1960 including 8,000 Methodist and 1,700 Anglican churches, there are some 2,000 mosques or Muslim prayer halls in that country. This is against the backdrop that although the first mosque in Britain was opened in the 19th century, by 1961, there were only seven mosques in that country.

A senior fellow for Transatlantic Relations, Soeren Kern, notes that whereas the Catholic Church has constructed only 20 new church buildings in France in ten years, and has closed down more than 60 churches, about 150 new mosques are currently being constructed in that country, which hosts the largest Muslim community in Europe. Actually, it has been projected that in future, Islam will become the dominant religion in Europe.

The Italian journalist, Giulio Meotti, estimates that every 75 seconds, a German leaves the church, and that between 1990 and 2010, some 340 church buildings belonging to the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), the largest federation of Protestant churches in Germany were closed down and 46 others demolished. Also, in Holland, two church buildings are closed down every week.

It is heart-rending that church buildings are being converted into mosques, restaurants, beer bars and other non-Christian uses. When one buyer converted a church building into a music club, he used the pulpit as the DJ stand. In Boostedt in Northern Germany, one undertaker now uses a former church building to display his coffins.

Another one in the North German town of Milow now houses an ATM. According to the Ghanaian-born Pentecostal Pastor B. O. K. Anaba, parts of the buildings of the Dutch Reformed Church, Amsterdam, and Pinster Gemeente in Den Haag, which have been sold out have been modified for use as brothels.

Whenever it becomes necessary to sell or demolish church buildings, the process of announcing its closure to the remaining church members, the actual vacation of the building, and the demolition exercise have always been very painful and sometimes traumatic experience. When church buildings are demolished, the religious objects are collected as artefacts and sold in countries such as Indonesia, Congo, Philippines, and Ukraine. Meotti notes that Holland has become the world's most important exporter of religious objects signifying that secularism has now become a business.

From 1970 to 2008, about 205 Catholic Church buildings have been demolished in Holland and 148 others converted for other non-Christian uses. One respondent (who wants to remain anonymous) states that within 10 years, the Catholic Diocese of Chicago has sold 150 church buildings because of dwindling attendance. He adds that if President Trump's proposal to construct a wall between Mexico and the US materialised, the US Catholic Church was going to suffer because its main source of getting members now have been the migrants from South America.

These notwithstanding, Professor John Samuel Mbiti and my respondents from the Evangelical Church in Rheinland, Düsseldorf, Germany emphatically argue that they did not think the traditional mainline churches in the West are declining because for them, church growth should not be measured by membership and attendance alone, but its contribution to society.

### **Factors Contributing to the Decline in Membership and Attendance of Traditional Mainline Churches in the West**

The state of the traditional mainline churches in the West is complex and dynamic, but taken as a whole, there is a quantifiable decline in membership and attendance. Analysis of data collected from 59 interviewees and 164 questionnaires in July and September 2017 identified several contributory factors.

Externally, the various philosophies from the period of the Enlightenment through to the postmodern era, which culminated in the Cultural Revolution in the West are responsible for the decline in membership and attendance of the traditional mainline churches. The permissive nature of those philosophies, coupled with the sexual revolution, homosexual debate, state-church system, secularism, improved educational standards, economic prosperity, greater access to information technology, over-work, effects of the two world wars, and demographical changes have led to moral relativism, political correctness and privatised spirituality. These have had negative impact on Christianity.

Internally, factors contributing to the decline include uncaring and unfriendly services, traditionalism, formalism, preaching of watered-down sermons, scandals involving priests, inadequate evangelistic, discipleship and missionary activities, promotion of liberal theology, perception of the ministry as a job rather than calling, failure of parents and the church to transmit the Christian faith to emerging generations, failed leadership, inadequate integration of migrants, superficial worship, and the one hour-long church services.

Although the scope of this essay will not allow for elaborate discussion of these factors, the subsequent charts will throw some light on them.

### Presenting the Data Collected

Table 1 shows the responses to the question, “Do you think the traditional mainline churches in the West are declining?” 80% of respondents said “yes”.

Response to question: “Do you think the traditional mainline churches in the West are declining?”	Frequency (n = 164)	Percentage (%)
Yes	132	80
No	24	15
No Idea	8	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 1: Decline in mainline traditional churches in the West**

Respondents were asked to identify signs that the traditional mainline churches in the West are declining. 49 percent of respondents identified dwindling membership while 24 percent perceive the unwillingness of young people to go to church as a concerning sign of decline. See Figure 1 below.

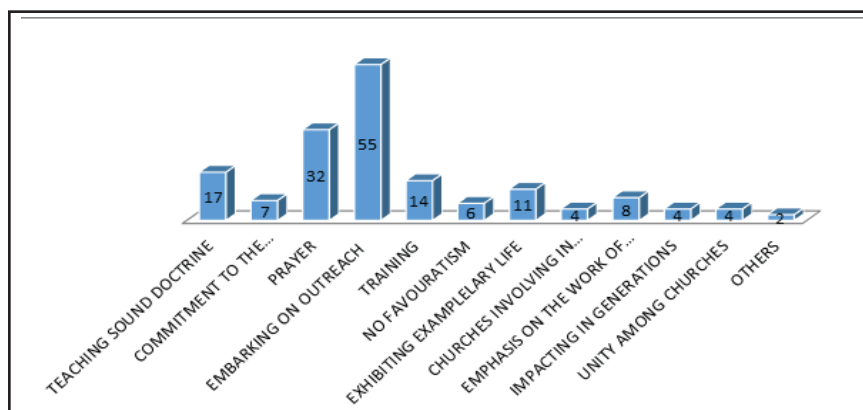


Figure 1: Signs of the Declining State of the Traditional Mainline Churches in the West

Respondents were asked to identify the factors contributing to the decline and their responses are shown in Figure 2 below. 30 percent of respondents attribute the decline to lack of effective leadership, and 17 percent think it is because of inadequate evangelism, 14 percent believe it is because of lack of commitment.

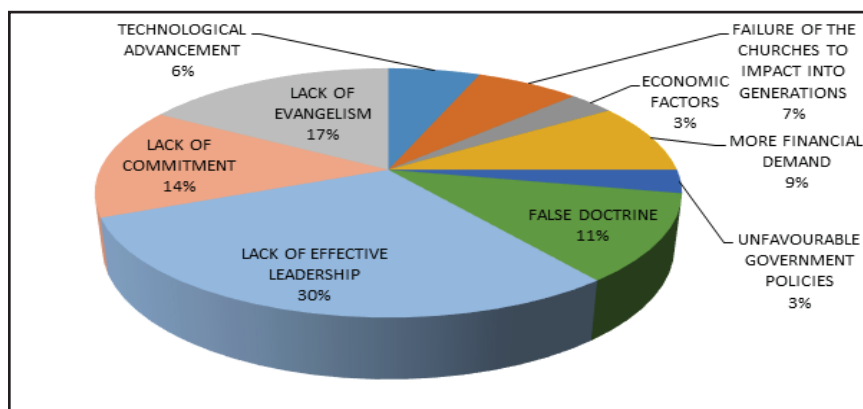


Figure 2: Reasons for the decline in membership and attendance in the traditional mainline churches in the West



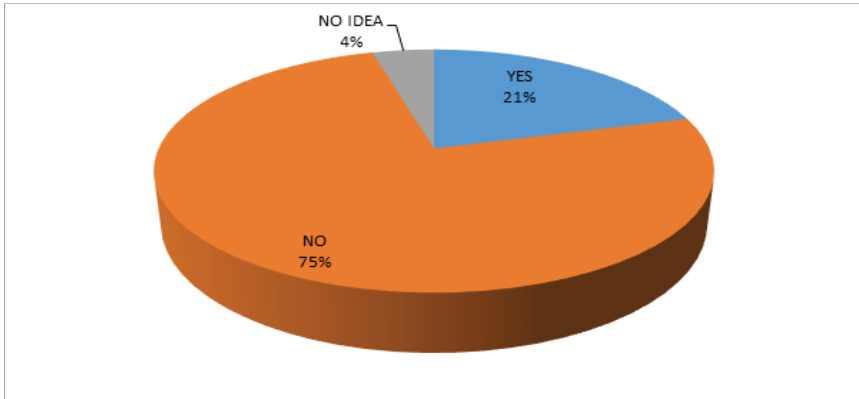


Figure 3: Are Young Westerners Regularly Attending Church Services?

Figure 3 above summarises the responses to the question “Are young Westerners regularly attending Church services? A worrying 75 percent of young westerners do not regularly attend church services, which suggests the future of the church in the West is depressing. The survey also explored the factors that may be keeping young people from attending church. Figure 4 below summarises the range of responses.

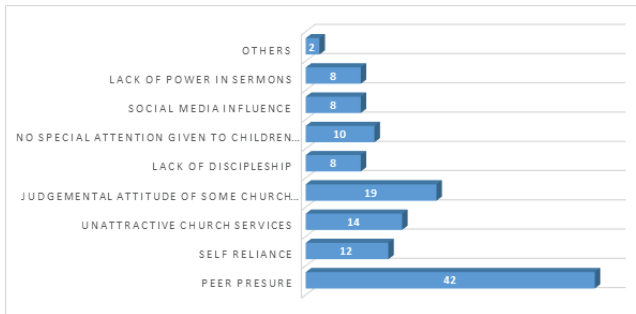


Figure 4: Factors Keeping Young Westerners from Attending Church Services

The fact that 42 respondents (of 164) representing 34 percent perceive peer pressure as the key factor keeping young westerners from attending church services suggests that the church should address the issue of peer-pressure and adopt a relationship-based mode of evangelism and discipleship.

Addressing the question of attracting youth to church - figure 5 below - 53 percent of respondents think that music and instrumentation could

attract young westerners to church and churches need to improve upon their music ministries by singing hermeneutically-balanced, gospel-inspiring and soul-searching songs. More than one quarter of respondents suggested that parents should continue to encourage their children to go to church.

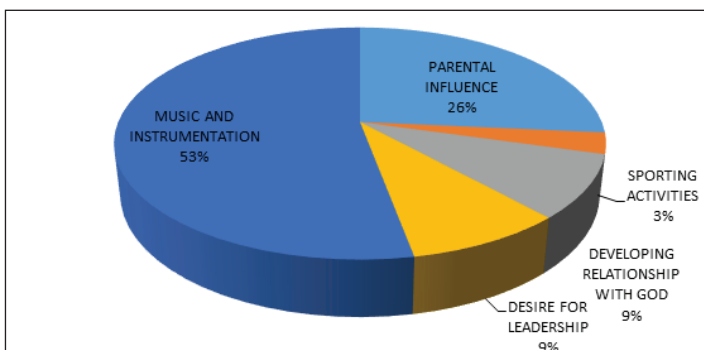


Figure 5: Factors that could Attract Young Westerners to Church

Exploring impact of technology on faith revealed a number of responses. As depicted in Figure 6 below, 35 percent of respondents believe that technology has helped improve educational standards yet 19 percent perceive it as spreading negative information and 18 percent think its use on the social media appears destructive. 21 percent consider it as making people have less time for God. 21 percent consider it as making people have less time for God. Christians must take advantage of technology by making available more online Bible-based materials and other technologically-driven Christian resources.

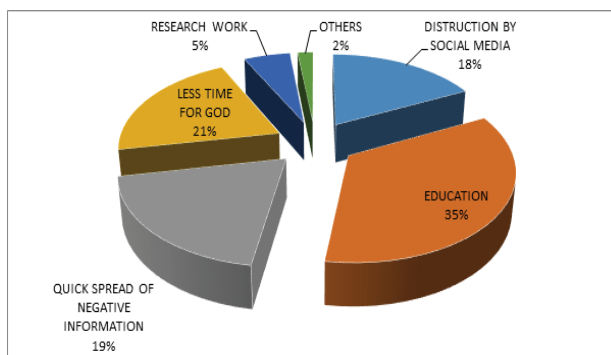
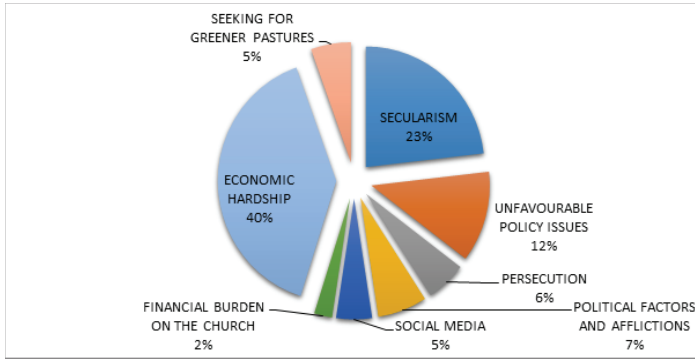


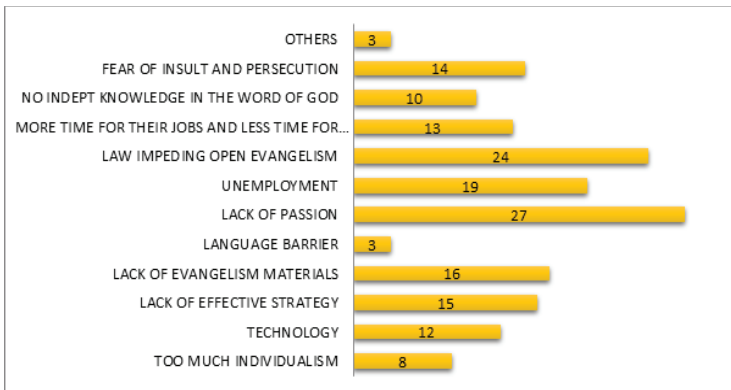
Figure 6: Impact of Technology on the Decline of Traditional Mainline Churches in the West

## Declining Membership and Attendance in the Traditional Mainline Churches



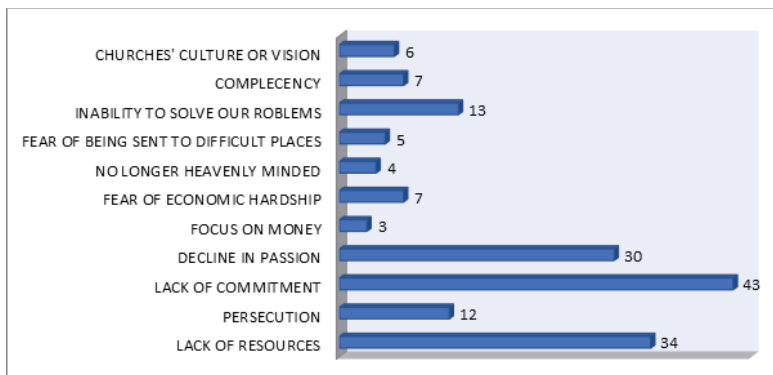
*Figure 7: Impact of Socio-Economic and Political changes in the Decline of Traditional Mainline Churches in the West*

Considering the impact of socio-economic and political changes in the decline of traditional mainline churches in the West, secularism, unfavourable policies, persecution, seeking greener pastures, political factions and affiliations, social media, financial burden, and economic hardship were identified. Of these, 40 percent of respondents noted economic hardship as the most important factor followed by secularism.



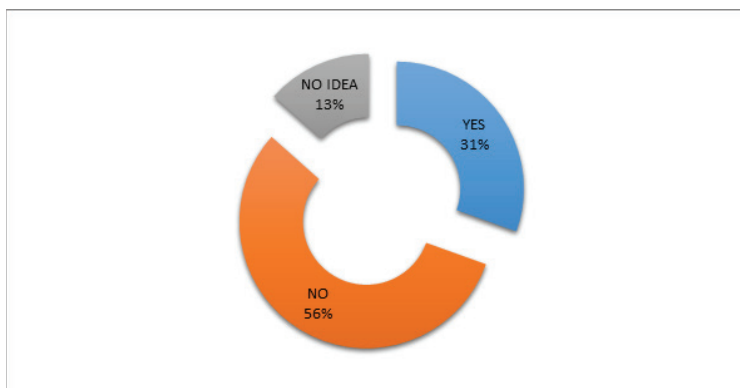
*Figure 8: Why Traditional Mainline Churches in the West No Longer Evangelise Aggressively*

Figure 8 shows that lack of passion and laws prohibiting open evangelism are the two most important reasons why traditional mainline churches in the West are no longer evangelising aggressively. The implication is that once Christians revive their concern and passion for lost souls, they can also revive their evangelistic zeal. They can also boldly apply for permission from law-enforcement agencies to proclaim openly the gospel.



*Figure 9: Why Traditional Mainline Churches in the West are No Longer Aggressively Involved in Foreign Missionary Activities*

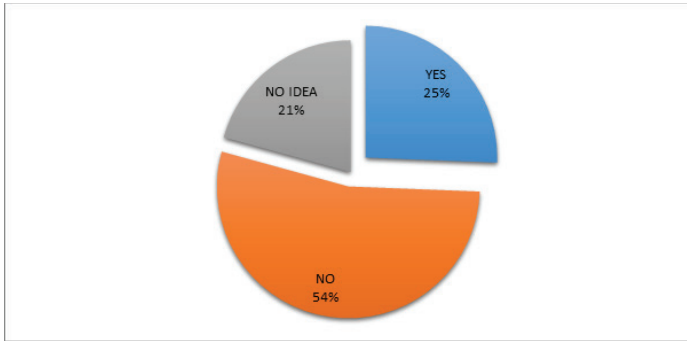
From Figure 9, lack of commitment and resources, together with decline in passion are the three main perceptions of why traditional mainline churches in the West are no longer aggressively involved in foreign missionary work.



*Figure 10: Do Westerners See the Need for God in their Lives?*

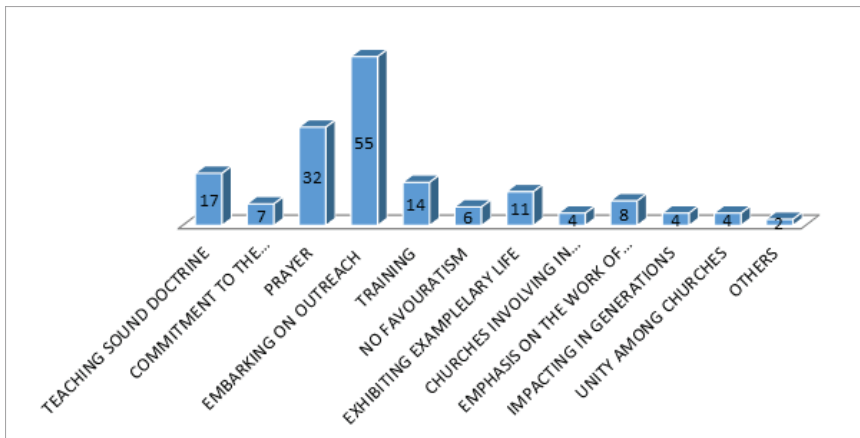
Figure 10 (above) shows that 31 percent of respondents think that some westerners still see the need for God in their lives, but 56 percent do not think that they need God in any way. This poses a challenge to gospel communicators because it is very difficult to share the gospel with anyone who does not even see the need for God in their lives. In such a situation of indifference, Christians will have to pray for gifts of healing and miracles to convince people about Christ Jesus.

## Declining Membership and Attendance in the Traditional Mainline Churches



*Figure 11: Do Westerners See the Relevance of the Bible in their Daily Lives?*

From Figure 11 (above) 54 percent of respondents do not think that westerners see the Bible as relevant to their lives, but 25 percent think otherwise. Again, this situation poses a challenge for gospel communicators because if people do not believe in the Bible, it is difficult to convince them of the Christian faith. In that case, along with the gifts of healing and miracles Christians will also need to develop relationship-based evangelistic methods to demonstrate the power and love of God to them.



*Figure 12: What should be Done to Revive the Traditional Mainline Churches in the West?*

As a means of reviving the traditional mainline churches in the West, Figure 12 (above) shows that embarking on gospel outreaches, prayer, and the teaching of sound doctrines are to be given topmost consideration.

## The Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Migrant Churches: A Ray of Hope for Traditional Mainline Churches in the West

Whereas traditional mainline churches in the West are declining in membership and attendance, the Pentecostals, Charismatics, and migrant churches are growing. Fuller Theological Seminary Professor, Cecil Mel Robeck, observes that between 1972 and 2012 in the US, whereas the Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and the other traditional churches were declining, the three largest Pentecostal churches in the US saw significant growth – the Church of God grew by 1,274 percent, Assemblies of God grew by 184 percent and the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, grew by 394 percent.

Actually, the five largest churches in the US are Pentecostal or Charismatic in ministry. They are Pastor Joel Osteen's 25,000-member strong Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, Pastor Creflo Dollar's 23,000-member strong World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia, the 20,000-member strong Saddleback Community Church, Lake Forest, California, led by Pastor Rick Warren, the 18,000-member strong Potters House Church in Dallas, led by Bishop T. D. Jakes, and Bishop Ed Young's 18,000-member strong Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas.

Similarly, the single largest Christian congregation in Europe is the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations Church in Kiev, Ukraine, founded by the Nigerian-born, Pastor Sunday Adelaja. Another migrant church from Nigeria, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, has over 80,000 members in various local congregations in the UK. The multi-national Kingsway International Christian Centre in London, founded by the Nigerian-born, Matthew Ashimolowo, now records up to 12,000 attendance on Sundays. Thus, the Pentecostal, Charismatic and migrant churches have provided a model for how churches can grow exponentially in a permissive postmodern environment.

Factors contributing to the growth of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and migrant churches in the West include reliance on the Holy Spirit, belief in the supernatural causality of events, emphasis on the primacy of the Bible, consistent personal and corporate prayer life, spontaneous worship, aggressive evangelism, strong fellowship, and cultural bonding.

Even though most respondents, including Professors Amos Young and Ryan Bolger of Fuller Theological Seminary, believe that God will never leave Himself without a witness (Acts 14:17), the traditional mainline churches in the West will have to learn from the Pentecostals, Charismatics and the migrant churches.

### **Lessons for Christianity in Ghana**

From the foregoing, it is necessary for Christianity in Ghana to take several lessons so that the same negative fate that has befallen the traditional mainline churches in the West does not befall it. While being optimistic about the future, the reality is that if the traditional mainline churches in the West, which has been in existence for many centuries is now experiencing such a massive decline, then Christianity in Ghana, which has been in existence for a relatively shorter period is vulnerable. Similarly, if previously Christian-dominated lands such as Turkey and North Africa have been overtaken by Islam, then Christianity in Ghana should not take lightly the phenomenon of declining traditional mainline churches in the West.

As noted by the former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, Ghana, Robert Aboagye- Mensah, the contemporary church and theological seminaries must join the early African theologians to reaffirm the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible.

Christianity in Ghana should realise that the various socio-economic, technological, political and religious changes that have taken place in the country over the last few decades have literally reduced church services to mainly Sunday mornings. Accordingly, it should not be too difficult to predict that another set of major socio-economic shifts can easily put the church under serious threat especially as the major permissive anti-Christian western philosophies such as postmodernity, secular humanism and New Age Movement are now having a profound negative impact on the church in Ghana.

The Christian ecumenical bodies in Ghana and the government should establish self-regulatory commissions to manage religious affairs, strange teachings and practices, ministerial charlatans, religious extremism and manipulations that are taking place in the country in the name of “deliverance”. Care must be taken that the people do

not lose confidence in Christianity. Already, it appears the numerous ministerial scandals and superficial lifestyles of some Christians in Ghana have sown some seeds of mistrust among the citizenry, which can ultimately lead them to lose confidence in Christianity. This must be avoided at all costs.

Churches in Ghana should understand that young people in the contemporary era are desperately in need of intimate and caring communities that would provide them with emotional healing and direction in life. Accordingly, the children and youth ministries will have to be upgraded to enable them to adequately address the needs of the young people. As today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, the church must satisfactorily address the needs of its young people. Winning and training them will not only guarantee mature church membership in future, but also reduce the level of crime and juvenile delinquency that bedevils Ghanaian society today.

Additionally, since young people today are expecting excellence in all activities, including that of the church, every effort must be made to ensure that the children and youth services are excellently run with trained full-time pastors appointed for them. Separate halls should also be constructed exclusively for them so that their services can be run simultaneously with the adult services. They should, however, be joined to the adult services so that they are not completely cut off from the mainstream church. After they have had their special service for some time, they must join the main service to "catch the spirit" of the church, and observe how the church services are conducted in their particular denominations.

Christian parents in Ghana will have to be encouraged to worship together with their children in line with Scripture (Deut. 6:6-9; 31:12-13; Josh. 8:35; 2 Chr. 20:13; 31:16-18; Ezra 10:1; Joel 2:15-16; Acts 21:5). They can also take lessons from the Muslims who have been able to indoctrinate their children in the Islamic faith mainly through worshipping together with them right from their infancy. The Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Professor Ioan Sauca, asserts that the Romanian Orthodox Churches are not declining as the other traditional mainline denominations in the West partly because the children worship with their parents in the same service as



they are fully considered as part of the church and, therefore, partake in its sacraments and liturgy.

While church leaders must be educated to appreciate the importance of the children and youth ministries, youth centres must also be constructed for them. Their programs must be regularly reviewed to reflect the contemporary situation.

**Christianity in Ghana must also undertake the following activities:**

- Continue steadfastly in prayer and fasting for sustained growth.
- Ensure that everyone who joins the church is taught to understand their salvation, and the need to live according to biblical standards.
- Continuously rely on the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Continuously teach the word of God without compromise. Adopt a back-to-the-Bible approach in all activities.
- Continue to preach the exclusive message that Jesus is the only way to salvation.
- Ensure that Christianity does not become mere routine liturgical rituals people go through on Sundays, but a real demonstration of Christ-likeness.
- Ensure that church members consistently observe their daily “quiet time” through prayer, Bible study and meditation.
- Avoid anything that will make people lose confidence in the church.
- Avoid leadership struggles, divisions, materialism, and all forms of moral and ecclesiastical corruption.
- Ensure that church services are inspirational, power-packed, and Spirit-controlled, with the preaching of Bible-based sermons.
- Ensure that the praise and worship ministries are strengthened through the use of hermeneutically-balanced and Spirit-inspired songs with the properly arranged musical accompaniment.
- Embark upon aggressive relationship-based evangelistic and discipleship programs.
- Understand the changing socio-economic-political and spiritual environment in which the church is ministering in order to

effectively communicate the unchanging gospel in the fast-changing world.

- Avoid being bogged down by tradition and formalism.
- Strengthen the bond of fellowship by demonstrating genuine Christian love to both rich and poor in the church.
- Appoint only spirit-filled leaders of character and integrity.
- Use the Bible to respond to emerging political, legal, social, moral and bioethical issues.
- Identify, encourage and even sponsor mature Christians to enter politics with a specific agenda to help consolidate good governance, and also influence decision-making that will promote Christian values and aspirations.
- Form Christian morality advocacy groups to collaborate with the government and other legislative bodies to enact laws that will protect and promote Christian standards of morality.

### **Lessons for Ghanaian Churches in the West**

With tightened immigration laws in the West, it has become difficult for many Ghanaians to migrate to the West. The implication is that the first generation members of the Ghanaian migrant churches in the West will soon retire, return to Ghana or even be called to glory. This means that the leadership of those migrant churches should prepare the next generation to take over, otherwise they can also suffer decline. In that case, they will not be able to service the mortgages on the few church buildings they have acquired. That will force them to sell their properties as the traditional mainline churches are currently doing. Accordingly, they may have to undertake the following activities:

### **Make the churches more youth-friendly**

Call spirit-filled leaders of character and integrity into the full-time ministry. Such pastors should be able to communicate effectively in the national languages of the respective countries.

Reduce the running of financially-induced programs and the taking of multiple offerings by exploring the possibility of administering the church solely on tithes and a few absolutely-necessary offerings.

Establish multi-cultural congregations to run alongside the Ghanaian-speaking congregations with the view of winning indigenous nationals for Christ.

### **Conclusion**

This essay has examined the phenomenon of declining church membership and attendance in the traditional mainline churches in the West with the view of drawing practical lessons for Christianity in Ghana. It has been seen that the traditional mainline churches in the West have actually declined as church membership and attendance have dwindled drastically with some pastors leaving the ministry, seminaries and Christian bookshops being closed down, and church buildings being abandoned, sold out, demolished or modified for secular usage.

Even though several factors have been identified as contributing to the decline, the essay has demonstrated that the Pentecostal, Charismatic and migrant churches in the West are still growing. This implies that if the traditional mainline churches in the West would inject Pentecostal ethos into their services by giving the Holy Spirit His rightful place, return to the primacy of Scripture, and get spirit-filled leaders of character and integrity, they are likely to be revived.

While being optimistic that the Lord will always honour His word and will not leave Himself without a witness in any generation (Acts 14:17), Christianity in Ghana should learn lessons from the traditional mainline churches in the West so that the same fate does not befall it. It must check the strange teachings and practices being promoted by some pastors and prophets, coupled with the various ecclesiastical scandals in Ghana. In addition to adopting a back-to-the-Bible approach in their activities, churches in Ghana must engage in morally-appropriate and Christ-honouring activities, promote aggressive relationship-based evangelism and discipleship programs, become more youth-friendly, continue to give the Holy Spirit His rightful place and appropriately use the Bible to respond to emerging socio-economic, political and religious issues without compromising its core Christian values.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Shoebat, W. “Christianity is Dying in Europe: Lowest Church Attendance”, cited in [www.shoebat.com/2016/01/13/91140/](http://www.shoebat.com/2016/01/13/91140/) Accessed on June 20, 2017.
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