

Neo-Prophetic *Akwankyerε* and Membership Retention in the Methodist and Anglican Churches in Ghana: A Contextual-Theological Assessment

Prince Osei Yeboah

Abstract

Neo-prophetic Christianity in Ghana has popularised the practice of *akwankyerε*, or spiritual guidance and direction, and has reshaped the country's religious and ecclesiastical landscape. Although the Methodist and Anglican churches have historically prioritised liturgical, sacramental, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical order, some members seek neo-prophetic ministries that emphasise charismatic spirituality and offer responses to contemporary spiritual and existential concerns. This study examines the relationship between *akwankyerε* and membership retention in the Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana. It employs a critical literature review and contextual-theological analysis informed by scholarship on neo-prophetic Christianity, African Pentecostalism, and Historic Mission Churches. The study argues that some members seek spiritual direction outside their churches because they perceive Methodist and Anglican ministries as insufficiently responsive to unemployment, spiritual insecurity, family dysfunction, sickness, witchcraft, and curses. It concludes that scripturally grounded healing, spiritual direction, and prophetic ministry, aligned with Methodist and Anglican theological traditions and ecclesiastical oversight, could strengthen pastoral care and help address migration to neo-prophetic churches.

Keywords

Neo-prophetic Christianity, Spiritual guidance, *Akwankyerε*, Historic Mission Churches, Methodist Church Ghana, Anglican Church Ghana, Membership retention

How to cite this article: Yeboah, Prince Osei. "Neo-Prophetic *Akwankyerε* and Membership Retention in the Methodist and Anglican Churches in Ghana: A Contextual-Theological Assessment." *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 6, no. 2 (2026): 56–73.

Introduction

The rapid growth of neo-prophetic Christianity has significantly reshaped Ghana's religious landscape. A prominent feature of this development is the increasing demand for *akwankyerε*, an Akan concept of guidance that has been reinterpreted in contemporary Christian practice through prophetic consultation, deliverance, visions, revelations, spiritual diagnosis, and counselling. Historic Mission Churches, including the Methodist

Church Ghana and the Anglican Church in Ghana, have traditionally emphasised liturgy, doctrine, sacramental worship, and pastoral order. The expansion of neo-prophetic ministries therefore raises questions about the continuing pastoral relevance of these churches, particularly among younger and urban Christians seeking immediate spiritual intervention and practical responses to existential concerns.

In his study, Omenyo observes that some members of Ghana's mainline churches sought responses to their spiritual and existential concerns beyond their inherited ecclesiastical traditions, particularly from churches where healing, deliverance, and other charismatic ministries were more readily available. This movement contributed to the growing incorporation of charismatic practices within Historic Mission Churches, including the Methodist Church Ghana.¹ This study highlights spiritual concerns and relevance in Methodism and Anglicanism in Ghana. Asamoah-Gyadu argues that the growth and appeal of Charismatic Christianity in Africa are closely related to its capacity to address contemporary existential and spiritual concerns, particularly through its emphasis on healing, deliverance, divine intervention, and empowerment in situations of adversity.²

Many scholars have analysed Neo-prophetic Christianity, African Pentecostalism and charismatic renewal movements in Ghana. Asamoah-Gyadu closely examines the development and growing appeal of African Charismatic Christianity within the context of African spirituality, demonstrating how its emphasis on healing, deliverance, spiritual warfare, prosperity, and divine intervention resonates with an African religious worldview in which the supernatural is closely connected with everyday human experience.³ Omenyo studies charismatic renewal in the Historic Mission Churches. Gifford, on the other hand, examines the religious, social, and economic dimensions of Ghana's emerging Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, paying particular attention to the relationship between prosperity, success, wealth, deliverance, and spiritual causality. He argues that these churches should be understood within Ghana's wider socio-economic environment, since their emphasis on material wellbeing, miracles, and overcoming spiritual forces responds to the economic uncertainties and existential concerns experienced by many believers.⁴ On the study of prophetism, Quayesi-Amakye introduces a deeper understanding in the theology of prophecy, evil and Pentecostal

¹ Cephas N. Omenyo, "From the Fringes to the Centre: Pentecostalisation of the Mainline Churches in Ghana," *Exchange* 34, no. 1 (2005): 39–60, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543053506338>.

² J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 93–94.

³ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 93–94.

⁴ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 44–60, 83–103.

spirituality in Ghanaian Christianity. However, the present study's focus on *akwankyerε* is closely related to Simon Kouessan Degbe's study of *Sunsum Akwankyerε*. Degbe's work is particularly relevant because it examines the meanings and theological dimensions associated with *akwankyerε*, including the mediation and appropriation of spiritual power, while also highlighting some of the theological and practical implications and concerns surrounding its practice within particular strands of Ghanaian Christianity.⁵

Yet little scholarship has examined the relationship between neo-prophetic *akwankyerε* and membership retention in the Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana. The central question is not whether Historic Mission Churches should reproduce neo-prophetic practices, but how they can draw on their own theological and pastoral resources to address members' spiritual needs while preserving ecclesiastical identity and avoiding dependence on prophetic specialists. Accordingly, this study interrogates the intersection of ecclesiastical tradition, charismatic spirituality, and pastoral care in Ghanaian Methodism and Anglicanism.

This study examines available literature to illustrate the association between the term *akwankyerε* and shifts in membership from the Methodist and Anglican Churches to Neo-prophetic Ministries, and to question how it could serve as a contextual pastoral response. Because the study does not include primary empirical data or denominational retention data, the proposed relationship between the sense of spiritual vacancy and membership shift is treated more as a contextual theological hypothesis than as a causal relationship. The study seeks to advance the discourses on African Christianity and contextual theology, on the renewal of the Church, and the future relevance of the Historic Mission Churches within the contemporary Ghanaian context of religious practice. The study advocates including contextual prophetic healing ministries to strengthen the pastoral and missionary work of the Historic Mission Churches.

Methodological Approach

This study uses contextual-theological analysis rather than field-based qualitative research. Sources include books, journal articles, and other scholarly publications on Neo-prophetic Christianity, African Pentecostalism, and all Historic Mission Churches, including African theology. It focuses on Ghanaian and African scholarship on prophetic ministry, African spirituality, and ecclesiastical transformation.

This study is inherently interpretative and analytical. It uses the literature available to assess the theological, sociological, and pastoral implications of Neo-Prophetic

⁵ Simon Kouessan Degbe, "Sumsum Akwankyerε: Emerging Modes of Mediation and Appropriation of Spiritual Power in Sections of Ghanaian Christianity," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24, no. 2 (2015): 270–289, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-02402011>.

akwankyerε for member retention in both the Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana. This analysis does not report experiences of church members because no interviews, focus groups, or surveys were conducted.

The predominant analytical method employed is contextual theology. This approach enables the study to investigate how the Methodist and Anglican churches may engage the African context, African spiritual experiences, and Christian concerns while maintaining commitments to Scripture, doctrine, and ecclesiastical order. The literature review provides the basis for the argument. The analysis is limited to the Ghanaian context and focuses on two representative Historic Mission Churches: the Methodist Church Ghana and the Anglican Church in Ghana. Because the study draws on a relatively small body of literature and does not use primary empirical data, its findings should be interpreted cautiously and regarded as context-specific rather than broadly generalisable.

Historical Background of the Methodist and Anglican Churches in Ghana and their Theological Practices

The Methodist Church Ghana

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's work in the Gold Coast formed the basis of the Methodist Church Ghana. The Mission was formally recognised as the Rev. Joseph Rhodes Dunwell's work in Cape Coast in 1835. The Methodists were unable to develop into a rapidly growing Mission, and, like the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman before them, some influential leaders carried out the evangelistic and educational work of Methodism in the Gold Coast.⁶

In Ghana, Methodism acquired popularity for its work in evangelism, education, discipline, holiness and social transformation. The church has contributed substantially to Ghana's socio-religious development by establishing schools, hospitals, and training colleges, and by undertaking other social work.⁷ Theologically, from the Wesleyan tradition, the Methodist Church adopted John Wesley's ideas on the theology of salvation, sanctification, and holiness, and embraced the spirit of institutionalised Christianity. Within mainstream Methodism, liturgical worship has focused on scripture, the sacraments, and the liturgy of the church, along with catechism and a ministry of pastoral care.

⁶ Francis Lodowic Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 112.

⁷ Hans W. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 85.

Some Methodist churches in Ghana formalised and became liturgical. As a result, some congregations began to place less emphasis on the spiritual experience and the work of the Holy Spirit, as Wesley preached. Omenyo and Asamoah-Gyadu note that this has created a divide between inherited mainline church forms and a growing need for Ghanaian spirituality.⁸ As a result, some church members began participating in charismatic and neo-prophetic ministries. These ministries focus on spiritual healing, prophecy, miracles, and deliverance.

The Anglican Church in Ghana

The origin of the Anglican Church in Ghana goes back to the colonial days when the activities of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and other Anglican missionary organizations were carried out. By the late 1800s the number of missionaries in the Gold Coast had grown enough to be more visible, especially on the coast, in Cape Coast, Accra and neighbour towns.⁹ The Anglican Church went on to be involved in the Anglican Communion, and slowly had influence in educational institutions, hospitals, and parish missions.

Theologically, the Anglican Church attributes the three aspects of Christian faith to be the scriptures, tradition and reason.¹⁰ Anglican worship is rich in structure and sacrament, focusing on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, prayers, creeds and organisation. Historically the Book of Common Prayer has influenced the Anglican worship and spirituality in Ghana. The church also has an established episcopal chain of command with the presence of bishops and diocesan structures.

George Ossom-Batsa and Kwesi Dickson note the importance of addressing Ghanaians' immediate spiritual and existential concerns.¹¹ As neo-prophetic churches emphasise prophecy, healing, and spiritual warfare, some Anglican members have been drawn to these ministries in the hope of experiencing healing and spiritual deliverance.

Theological Practices of the Methodist and Anglican Churches in Ghana

⁸ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 43; Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 154.

⁹ Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana*, 104.

¹⁰ Joshua Narteh Kudadjie, *Moral Renewal in Ghana: Ideals, Realities, and Possibilities* (Accra: Asempa Publishers/Christian Council of Ghana, 1995), 67.

¹¹ George Ossom-Batsa, *African Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: SonLife Press, 2018), 93; Kwesi Abotsia Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 121.

Historically, both the Methodist and Anglican churches had their own Christian traditions rooted in those of European missionaries. Typical elements of their theology involve liturgy, sacrament ministry, scripture reading, teaching on the word, pastoral counseling, catechesis, choir and hymn singing, and social outreach ministries. The role played by these churches in the Christianization, education, health care and moral upbringing of the Ghanaian society was quite significant.¹² Their theological emphases, however, tended more to doctrinal stability and order in the church than to prophetic spirituality and spiritual warfare, which are greatly appreciated in the African cosmological context.

However, it is evident in practice that, African Christians are not entirely detached from the indigenous beliefs, worldviews, and practices that have historically shaped African religious consciousness. Consequently, some continue to interpret experiences of illness, misfortune, suffering, and other life crises within a worldview that recognises the possible influence of evil forces and malevolent spiritual powers on human wellbeing.

According to Asamoah-Gyadu, Africa's Christians view life with a strong spiritual perspective, such that sickness, failure, barrenness and poverty could be linked to the presence of a supernatural cause.¹³ Therefore, churches that are not able to offer practical spiritual solutions to such concerns may look inadequate to many believers.

In this study, "neo-prophetic ministries" refers to Ghanaian Christian ministries in which a recognised prophetic figure exercises a central role in diagnosing the spiritual causes of personal or communal problems and prescribing responses through prophecy, prayer, healing, deliverance, dream interpretation, spiritual counselling, and related practices. The term denotes a distinctive stream within the broader Pentecostal and Charismatic environment rather than every church that affirms prophecy or the gifts of the Spirit. These ministries appeal to believers by offering personalised spiritual mediation and practical responses to existential concerns within an African religious worldview.¹⁴

Conceptualising *Akwankyerε* in Ghanaian Christianity

In Akan, *akwankyerε* means 'showing the way' and can connote guiding someone through problems related to struggles in life, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, protection, business, health, and destiny. In Neo-prophetic Christianity, *akwankyerε* has largely been reframed to mean prophecies, discernment, visions, deliverance, dream interpretations,

¹² Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*, 214-215.

¹³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 58.

¹⁴ Quayesi-Amakye, *Christology and Evil in Ghana*, 74.

and spiritual counselling. In his seminal article ‘Sumsum Akwankyerɛ’, Degbe focuses on this aspect and argues that, in some circles of Christianity in Ghana, spiritual direction and divine instruction are the meanings associated with this term, and he looks at *akwankyerɛ* as a channel through which spiritual powers are channelled and appropriated in Ghanaian Christianity.¹⁵ His article also discourages an overly optimistic approach to the term: ‘sunsum akwankyerɛ’ is problematic for Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity because it raises doctrinal issues, ritual mediation, ministerial authority, and the appropriation of spiritual power.

According to Johnson K. Asamoah-Gyadu, discussing African Christianity (which he defines as Christianity within the African Primal Worldview) cannot be complete without addressing the African Primal Worldview, as spiritual causes and supernatural agents affect the human condition.¹⁶ African Christianity looks for a type of religion that will be a remedy for witchcraft, curses, demonic activities, sickness, and poverty. As such, neo-prophetic churches become attractive because they offer immediate spiritual answers and solutions to these issues.

Omenyo believes that how well Christianity fits into Africa can be seen in how it addresses existential and spiritual anxieties.¹⁷ Neo-prophetic ministries root their influence in the lack of response by mission-founded liturgical traditions to spiritual anxieties and fears that worshippers perceive.

In this study, *akwankyerɛ* is not synonymous with prophetic speech. Prophetic speech is a particular utterance understood to communicate divine insight, warning, or encouragement, whereas *akwankyerɛ* is a broader pastoral process of spiritual guidance that may include prophecy but can also involve prayer, counselling, discernment, dream interpretation, healing, deliverance, and practical direction. For many Christians in Ghana, it functions as an existential framework intended to provide direction, hope, and spiritual empowerment. Degbe nevertheless cautions against treating *sunsum akwankyerɛ* as an uncomplicated Christian resource, because its layered practices raise doctrinal and ethical questions about ritual mediation, ministerial authority, and the appropriation of spiritual power. This distinction is central to the present argument: Methodist and Anglican engagement with *akwankyerɛ* must combine pastoral responsiveness with critical theological discernment rather than uncritically adopting neo-prophetic forms.¹⁸

¹⁵ Degbe, “Sumsum Akwankyerɛ,” 270–289.

¹⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 93–94.

¹⁷ Cephas N. Omenyo, “New Wine in an Old Wine Bottle?: Charismatic Healing in the Mainline Churches in Ghana,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 201), 233–236.

¹⁸ Degbe, “Sumsum Akwankyerɛ,” 270–289.

Pneumatological Tension: Prophetic Guidance and the Spirit's Guidance of Believers

Any attempt to incorporate *akwankyere* into Methodist or Anglican ministry must address significant pneumatological questions. Both traditions affirm that the Spirit is given to the Church and is active in the life of every believer; divine guidance cannot therefore be treated as the exclusive possession of a prophetic specialist. Within Methodism, the Spirit strengthens and forms believers through prayer, worship, and the means of grace. Within Anglicanism, believers pray for the Spirit to grant right judgement in all things. A minister may exercise recognised gifts of prophecy, counsel, or discernment, but such ministry must serve the Spirit's work in the body of Christ rather than replace believers' prayerful discernment or become their only route to God. This balance is evident in the New Testament: gifts are distributed by the one Spirit among members of the body (1 Cor. 12:4–11), prophetic speech is weighed by others (1 Cor. 14:29), and believers are instructed to test what they hear (1 Thess. 5:19–21). A Methodist or Anglican form of *akwankyere* can therefore be defended only as accountable pastoral discernment exercised within the Church.

The Need for the Adoption of *Akwankyere* in the Methodist and Anglican Churches

Migration of members from the Methodist and Anglican Church to the Neo-prophetic ministries shows the need for contextual pastoral adaptation in Historic Mission Churches in Ghana. Such migration should not be understood merely as denominational preference but also as an indication that some Christians seek forms of worship and pastoral ministry that respond more directly to their spiritual and existential concerns. Sarbah, Niemandt, and White identify significant “push” and “pull” factors in the movement of Ghanaian Christians from HMCs to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and argue that the phenomenon requires HMCs to reconsider aspects of their missional and pastoral practice. According to research on the Methodist Church in Ghana, unfulfilled spiritual and social needs, liturgical difficulties, and leadership issues are some of the reasons why young people are gravitating toward Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The study concludes that greater adaptability is required for the church to remain relevant over time. In this context, pastoral adaptation calls for a critical retrieval of biblical charismatic resources such as prophecy, healing, discernment, prayer, and properly regulated *akwankyere* within established structures of theological discernment and ecclesiastical accountability rather than requiring HMCs to give up their theological, liturgical, or ecclesiastical identities.

To be applicable and effect transformational change in the HMCs, these churches on the continent must engage with other spheres of African reality as witness among the

Pentecostal/Charismatic ministries. Similarly, Omenyo argues that Historic Mission Churches must meet Africans' spiritual aspirations while prioritising theology.¹⁹ The inability to confront the challenges of witchcraft fears, spiritual attacks and curses, and to provide spiritual security, carries people to Neo-prophetic churches.

The adoption of *akwankyere* within the Methodist and Anglican churches does not necessarily imply the imitation of all Neo-prophetic practices. On the contrary, it is the contextual application of: Prophetic counselling, Healing ministries, Prayer and deliverance and Spiritual discernment. To ensure that such ministries are not manipulated, commercialized, or misused in doctrinal aspects, they must be supervised by an ecclesiastical authority and disciplined by biblical principles.²⁰

Biblical and Methodist precedents deserve more nuance than associating them with contemporary *akwankyere*. 1 Samuel 9:6-10 describes Saul going to Samuel for answers concerning the lost donkeys. 2 Kings 5:8-14 shows Elisha addressing Naaman and giving him instructions about his sickness. In Acts 11:27-30 and 21:10-14, we see Agabus express prophetic messages that influenced the entire community. These examples show sequences and episodes in the Holy Scriptures in which prophetic figures describe certain actions and give instructions and warnings to communities, or deliver prophetic messages. These examples, however, do not establish that a permanent Christian prophetic class exists to which Christians should routinely submit their decisions and actions. John Wesley's work also suggests the importance of actively experiencing the Holy Spirit and the gifts of grace and defining Christian experience in terms of assurance²¹ and discernment; however, no concrete evidence suggests that he was involved in contemporary Neo-prophetic *akwankyere*. Therefore, given the preceding comments, what should interest us more is the right of Spirit-guided discernment in Christian communities, rather than relying on a prophetic specialist.

In summary, the theory suggests that the Methodist and Anglican Churches in Ghana have justifiable reasons to initiate contextual ministries that are responsive to the existential and spiritual needs of their members. Such a responsive approach could enhance member commitment; however, this literature-based study does not confirm that the absence of *akwankyere* or similar ministries leads members to migrate to Neo-prophetic ministries or to an overall decline in church membership.

¹⁹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 141.

²⁰ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 172.

²¹ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1989), 392.

Resistance to Charismatic and Prophetic Practices within the Methodist and Anglican Churches

In spite of the increasing trend of the Neo-prophetic spirituality in Ghana, the introduction of the charismatic worship practices and *akwankyere* into the Methodist and Anglican churches has not been free of opposition. Although some clergy within these Historic Mission Churches have attempted to introduce charismatic styles of worship, healing services, deliverance sessions, prophetic prayer meetings, and contemporary praise forms into their ministries, such innovations often encounter opposition from sections of the church hierarchy, senior clergy, and some lay members.

Omenyo observes that charismatic renewal groups in Historic Mission Churches in Ghana have historically caused division between renewalists and more conservative church leaders.²² Some lose liturgy, doctrinal sturdiness, and church order to a charismatic tendency. For these reasons, some members of Historic Mission Churches criticise prophetic and charismatic clergy for “Pentecostalising” the church.

Asamoah-Gyadu has also noted resistance to calls for experiential and prophetic ministry in Historic Mission Churches.²³ Some Bishops, Ministers, and Church Councils are more apprehensive about the doctrinal implications of prophecy, spiritual guidance, deliverance, anointing, and praying in tongues.

Some parts of Ghana’s Anglican Church experience friction between proponents of charismatic renewal and those who prefer established liturgical and sacramental forms. Some renewal-engaged clergy and congregations have begun healing ministries, added revival services, and adopted worship practices informed by Pentecostal traditions.²⁴ In contrast, some clergy and laity have adopted and defended more traditional Anglican liturgical and sacramental practices. Charismatic clergy will face resistance from those concerned that such activities will endanger church order and identity.

The Methodist Church of Ghana has faced the same problems. According to Omenyo, the introduction of healing services, deliverance, and revival-oriented worship by some Methodist ministers sparked backlash from church-based conservatives, who associated these with Neo-prophetic excesses.²⁵ However, these practices draw youth and church members seeking solutions to spiritual and existential crises. Gifford adds that the Historic Mission Churches of Africa have faced a similar problem: balancing institutional

²² Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 97.

²³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 154.

²⁴ Ossom-Batsa, *African Christianity in Ghana*, 104.

²⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 122.

custom with members' contemporary spiritual needs.²⁶ Church leadership maintains theological orthodoxy and order, while church members grow spiritually hungry and long for a Christianity that brings immediate spiritual change and offers solutions to everyday challenges.

The literature links disputes over Methodist and Anglican charismatic renewal to members leaving for Neo-prophetic ministries. Some suggest members who do not find their needs met in traditional church environments will opt to join churches that focus on charismatic practices, such as prophecy, healing and deliverance. While this makes membership migrations a valid pastoral concern for HMCs, it does not provide evidence that opposition to charismatic practices leads to denominational decline, or that embracing charismatic practices would stop migratory tendencies. Some argue that charismatic and prophetic practices should be practised within controlled theological frameworks and church order. In espousing contextual African Christianity and maintaining church doctrine. Quayesi-Amakye and Tsekpoe demonstrate that the recognition of prophetic ministry need not result in unregulated prophetism; rather, prophetic gifts can be exercised within biblical principles, spiritual discernment, ministerial integrity, and the administrative oversight of the Church.²⁷

There is clearly a disconnection in the positions taken on charismatic renewal resistance in Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana, and the acceptance of Neo-prophetic ministries. This shows that renewal initiatives must be tailored to this environment. For these churches, the question is not whether they will embrace African spirituality responsibly and accountably, but how.

The Rise of Neo-Prophetic Influence in Ghana

From the late 1980s, Neo-prophetic Christianity gained prominence in Ghana, especially in the 1990s, when charismatic preachers and ministries began to emphasise prophecy, healing, deliverance, miracles, and prosperity. Asamoah-Gyadu²⁸, Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi²⁹ and Paul Gifford³⁰ analyse different aspects of the broader Pentecostal and Charismatic expansion and its influence on Ghanaian Christianity. Like other ministries,

²⁶ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 143.

²⁷ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "The Concept of the Prophet in Ghana's Church of Pentecost," *Orita: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* 43, no. 1 (2011): 9-12; Christian Tsekpoe, "The Dynamics of African Pentecostalism: The Christianisation of Indigenous Religious Practices and the Indigenisation of the Christian Faith" (PhD diss., Middlesex University, 2020), 127.

²⁸ Kwabena J. Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 23.

²⁹ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Blessed Publications, 2001), 56

³⁰ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 89.

many Neo-prophetic ministries have used the media, public crusades, prayer centres, and personal spiritual counselling to expand.

Neo-prophetic ministers claim the right to speak about the hidden causes of suffering and to give spiritual direction toward healing, protection, and amelioration of suffering. Quayesi-Amakye analyses the role of evil and the presence of spiritual causality and intercession in Ghanaian Pentecostalism.³¹ This has caused anguish in Historic Mission Churches, as some members have begun to seek prophetic ministry outside their inherited worship.

The growing significance of the prophet as a religious expert who asserts the spiritual ability to identify the underlying causes of human issues is a defining characteristic of this evolution. Therefore, Neo-Prophetic Christianity tackles ordinary worries like illness, infertility, unemployment, marriage, business failure, death, and spiritual attack in addition to traditional Christian concerns about salvation. Quayesi-Amakye similarly demonstrates how the reality of evil and the pursuit of divine intervention continue to be central to Ghanaian Pentecostal spirituality³², while Omenyo and Atiemo note that Ghanaian Neo-Propheticism functions within the broader Pentecostal environment while displaying distinctive prophetic emphases.³³

The evolution of religious communication has also contributed to the growth of Neo-Prophetic influence. While modern digital platforms have made prophecy, deliverance, testimonies, and spiritual guidance accessible to far larger audiences, radio and television originally allowed prophets to expand their ministries beyond their congregations. According to recent Ghanaian research, social media has emerged as a significant channel for the dissemination and integration of Neo-Prophetic teachings, especially those related to prosperity, spiritual warfare, and prophetic revelation, into believers' religious decision-making.³⁴ As a result, prophetic influence increasingly transcends geographic and denominational barriers.

This development has important implications for Historic Mission Churches, particularly the Anglican and Methodist Churches in Ghana. These churches must recover, acknowledge, and appropriately use the prophetic gift as a biblical charism within the

³¹ Quayesi-Amakye, *Christology and Evil in Ghana*, 91.

³² Quayesi-Amakye, "Prophetism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches," 162-173

³³ Cephas N. Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Propheticism in Ghana," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2006): 55-68

³⁴ Grace Sintim Adasi, Sanatu Fusheini, and Frank Amuzu, "Digital Dissemination of Neo-Prophetic Theologies in Ghana: Societal Impact and Challenges in the Age of Social Media," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 11, no. 6 (2025): 279-292.

life and ministry of the Church rather than permitting prophecy and other charismatic gifts to become almost entirely connected with Neo-Prophetic ministries. Paul lists prophecy as one of the Holy Spirit's gifts for the Christian community's edification (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1-5), but he also calls for its careful evaluation (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19-21). Anglican and Methodist churches are challenged to provide credible spaces where these spiritual needs can be met within sound doctrine, sacramental life, pastoral accountability, and ecclesiastical oversight because some members of Historic Mission Churches are drawn to Neo-Prophetic ministries for prophecy, healing, deliverance, and spiritual direction. Omenyo illustrates how charismatic renewal has impacted the older mission churches themselves,³⁵ while Asamoah-Gyadu highlights the significance of experience spirituality within modern Ghanaian Christianity.³⁶ Therefore, rather than merely copying the methods of autonomous Neo-Prophetic churches, strengthening biblically grounded prophetic ministry inside Anglican and Methodist churches may help them respond more effectively to members who seek prophetic experiences elsewhere.

Membership Retention Challenges in the Methodist and Anglican Churches

³⁷The literature identifies reports of some young Christians leaving Historic Mission Churches for charismatic and neo-prophetic ministries. Asamoah-Gyadu notes that Historic Mission Churches are sometimes perceived as formal and insufficiently responsive to contemporary spiritual and existential concerns. These observations indicate a pastoral challenge, but the available literature does not establish the scale of migration from Methodist and Anglican churches or demonstrate that perceived liturgical formality is its principal cause.

Because of this, members of the Methodist and Anglican Churches attend prophetic conventions, deliverance services, and prayer camps run by Neo-prophetic ministries. George Ossom-Batsa adds that many African Christians want authentic connections with the Holy Spirit beyond the formality of Sacraments.³⁸ Members of these churches believe that if their churches do not offer divine healing and spiritual presence, among other things, they should attend religious venues that do. The challenge for Methodist and Anglican churches remains bridging the gap between their formalism and their members' real-life experiences. The subsequent section discusses the need for Historic Mission Churches (HMCs) to recognise, accommodate, and responsibly integrate prophetic

³⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 141.

³⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 23.

³⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 76.

³⁸ Ossom-Batsa, *African Christianity in Ghana*, 93.

ministry, particularly the practice of *akwankyere*, within their ecclesiastical structures and pastoral oversight.

The Need to Inculcate *Akwankyere* in Historic Mission Churches

Some contemporary scholars argue that HMCs in Africa should be involved in contextual ministry that addresses different Africans' existential realities and circumstances without compromising biblical orthodoxy. This section focuses on three dimensions that are necessary for the inculcation:

Contextual Theology and African Spiritual Needs

According to Kwame Bediako, Christianity must interact meaningfully with African religious consciousness.³⁹ Bediako believes that African Christians can retain their reasoning when they become Christian and Christianize it.⁴⁰ Churches that fail to consider the spiritual dimensions of Africans are at risk of pastoral disaffiliation. Therefore, there is a need for ministries in both the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church to address spiritual insecurity, fear of witchcraft, family curses, demonic oppression, unemployment, sickness, and marital problems. To meet this need, ministries based on Bible prophecy, counselling, and healing are likely to be fit for churches.

Preventing Membership Migration

The literature reviewed describes how some members of Historic Mission Churches look for *akwankyere* outside their churches, which is attributed to members believing their churches lack spiritual provision and/or effective ministries for spiritual deliverance. When discussing this trend, Asamoah-Gyadu suggests that some Neo-prophetic churches address this need and offer spiritual care by having a prophet attend to the needs, dreams, and spiritual instructions for a particular individual or group.⁴¹ Some worshippers believe that liturgical, routinised worship is less closely related to their existential problems. These observations can help formulate a hypothesis of contextual theology: carefully supervised, structured prophetic counselling, prayer, and healing ministries can address challenges and enhance pastoral care. These observations do not prove that such an approach can reduce member outflow; to evaluate that, surveys, interviews, and data on denominational retention would be helpful.

Biblical and Historical Precedents

³⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 260.

⁴⁰ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 260.

⁴¹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics*, 154.

Biblical and historical precedents provide a strong basis for the exercise of prophecy, spiritual discernment, and pastoral guidance within the Christian tradition. Scripture itself offers prophecy along with other gifts of the Spirit for the edification and well-being of the believing community, and it has significant precedents for prophetic service. Even though there are dishonest prophets in the modern prophetic environment in Ghana whose actions go against biblical values and create grave ethical and theological issues, such misdeeds shouldn't cause prophetic service to be completely rejected. Additionally, there are prophetic ministers whose ministries exhibit the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, healing, spirit discernment, and release from demonic tyranny. The challenge, therefore, is not simply whether prophetic ministry should be permitted, but how authentic prophetic gifts can be recognised, discerned, regulated, and exercised responsibly within the theological and ecclesiastical structures of the Church.

In 1 Samuel 9:6-10, we see a seeker come to a recognised prophet to receive knowledge not available to him. In 2 Kings 5:8-14, we see prophetic power and authority paired with a very specific act. In the New Testament, we see Agabus' prophetic warnings in Acts 11:27-30 and 21:10-14 where the receiving communities must divine and respond appropriately. More so, we see the gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed to believers in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and we can also note that in 1 Corinthians 14:29, prophetic speech must be evaluated by others. Thus, as with the biblical examples of prophetic ministry, the church supports not an unquestionable, singularly gifted prophetic specialist, but a ministry of prophetic gifts discerned by a community of faith. Likewise, while Wesley's and Anglican's focus on experiential faith and prayer, and the presence of the Holy Spirit also support the practice of Christian Discernment, they do not, on their own, support Neo-prophetic *akwankyerɛ* as it is seen in their current state. These biblical precedents should inspire Historic Mission Churches (HMCs) to recognise and strengthen prophetic ministry within their ecclesiastical structures, enabling them to respond more effectively to the spiritual needs of members who might otherwise seek prophetic guidance and assistance outside their churches.

Risks and Theological Cautions

Although *akwankyerɛ* has pastoral value, scholars find its unrestrained use problematic. Gifford opposes some Neo-prophetic Christianity.⁴² These tendencies include the promotion of Christian spirituality, and with them fear and the commercialisation of the spirit. Omenyo shares similar concerns about spiritual phenomena that promote reliance

⁴² Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 172.

on charismatic leaders and spiritual ‘specialists’ at the expense of committed Christian discipleship.⁴³ This leads to prophetic ministry and direction remaining Christ-centred, under scriptural control, practising responsible pastoral care, with no cost associated with it, and under proper ecclesiastical oversight.

Conclusion

Neo-prophetic *akwankyerε* has made itself known in modern Ghanaian Christianity. This indicates the place of prophecy, healing, deliverance, and spiritual direction, as well as existential security, in the contemporary Christian experience. The literature reviewed indicates that the appeal of some Methodist and Anglican members’ to Neo-prophetic ministries is not solely a preference for another denomination; it is more likely a response to spiritual and pastoral needs which these members have determined their churches do not meet.

Ghanaian Christian responses to sickness, misfortune, unemployment, and problems in their marriages and other worries include the possibility of a spiritual cause. Neo-prophetic ministries meet these concerns through prophetic prayers, healing, and deliverance, as well as spiritual direction. This literature-based study cannot quantify member movement caused by these practices, however, it does articulate why *akwankyerε* matters for the Historic Mission Churches as a pastoral and theological concern.

The literature describes movements in the Methodist and Anglican Churches that incorporate healing and prophetic prayer with liturgical worship, alongside prophetic and revival prayer ministry, while remaining concerned with the Church’s order, doctrine, and liturgy. The best approach is neither rejection nor imitation of these movements, but prayerful theological discernment of the spirit that guides the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the pastoral care of the Churches, and corporate responsibility within each of these individual Churches.

Methodist and Anglican churches in Ghana should develop contextual forms of spiritual guidance that are biblically and theologically defensible. This does not require abandoning their traditions or imitating Neo-prophetic practice. Rather, such ministries must remain faithful to Scripture, ecclesiastical discipline, and each church’s theological heritage while responding directly to the spiritual concerns of their congregations.

Such engagement must also preserve the theological agency of ordinary believers. In Methodist and Anglican contexts, the Holy Spirit’s guidance is not confined to a

⁴³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 141.

prophetic office; the Spirit is active throughout the Church through Scripture, prayer, worship, conscience, communal discernment, and the gifts distributed among the body of Christ. A contextual ministry of spiritual direction is therefore appropriate only when it equips believers to discern faithfully rather than making them dependent on a minister presumed to possess exclusive access to the will of God.

Recommendations

The recommendations may be implemented through a phased programme of pastoral ministry, theological formation, and engagement with younger and urban Christians. First, each church should appoint a diocesan or connexional oversight team to develop written protocols for prayer, spiritual counselling, healing, discernment, referral, safeguarding, financial integrity, theological review, and ministerial accountability. Second, selected clergy and lay leaders should receive training in African spirituality, Pentecostal and contextual theology, pastoral counselling, and the responsible exercise of charismatic gifts. Third, the churches should pilot supervised ministries of prayer, healing, counselling, and discernment in selected congregations, alongside strengthened youth, campus, urban, and pastoral-care networks. The pilot should prohibit sensationalism, commercialisation, coercion, and manipulation, and should include clear procedures for complaints and referrals. Finally, the oversight team should evaluate the programme at agreed intervals using participant feedback, safeguarding reports, ministry records, and available membership data before recommending wider implementation. Future empirical research should assess whether these initiatives improve pastoral care, member commitment, and retention.

Note on Copyright

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, adaptation, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Study limitations

Readers should interpret the study's findings with caution, as they result from analysis of a small sample of literature. The findings may be applicable in a limited context.

References

- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. *African Charismatics: Current Developments within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

- Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013.
- Bartels, Francis Lodowic. *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Bediako, Kwame. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995.
- Debrunner, W. Hans. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967.
- Degbe, Simon Kouessan. "Sumsum Akwankyerε: Emerging Modes of Mediation and Appropriation of Spiritual Power in Sections of Ghanaian Christianity." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24, no. 2 (2015): 270–289. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-02402011>.
- Gifford, Paul. *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Kudadjie, Joshua Narteh. *Moral renewal in Ghana: Ideals, realities, and possibilities*. Accra: Asempa Publishers/Christian Council of Ghana, 1995.
- Dickson, Kwesi Abotsia. *Theology in Africa*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984.
- Larbi, Emmanuel Kingsley. *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. Accra: Blessed Publications, 2001.
- Omenyo, Cephass Narh. *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2006.
- Omenyo, Cephass Narh, and Wonderful Adjei Arthur. "The Bible Says! Neo-Prophetic Hermeneutics in Africa." *Studies in World Christianity* 19, no. 1 (2013): 50–70.
- Quayesi-Amakye, Joseph. *Christology and Evil in Ghana: Towards a Pentecostal Public Theology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013.
- Rack, D. Henry. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. London: Epworth Press, 1989.
- Ossom-Batsa, George. *African Christianity in Ghana*. Accra: SonLife Press, 2018.