

Women in international mission

An Interview with Regina Osei, Global Ministries, serving in Ghana

by Ana Gobledale

For we know that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to God's purpose.

—Romans 8:28

Why do some people seem to glow with faith? As I interviewed Regina Osei, Global Ministries missionary serving in Ghana, I sensed a profound joy in her life, a joy in her call to Christian service, a joy grounded in a strong faith. Her firm sense that God is using her for good resonates through her joyful enthusiasm for the work at hand. Her firm belief that she has been “called according to God’s purpose” is the guideline throughout her joy-filled journey from Memphis to Ghana. Regina’s favourite hymn, “Great Is Your Faithfulness,”* celebrates this attitude of joy and faithfulness, so I have scattered verses throughout this article.

As you read Regina’s reflections, consider this element of joy in her life and in your own. And remember to smile!

Ana

Ana Gobledale served our church in South Africa and Zimbabwe, from 1984–2000. Currently, she serves Global Ministries with her husband, Tod, as chaplain of Churches of Christ Theological College in Melbourne, Australia.



*Great is your faithfulness, Oh God, Creator.
With you no shadow of turning we see.*

Regina’s mother was a powerful spiritual influence...

I was born into a Christian home in Memphis, Tennessee, and was reared in a female-dominated environment, by my mother, grandmother, aunt and cousin. While not the traditional two-parent family home, it was not a single-parent home either, but rather an African traditional extended-family setting.

My mother has been the greatest spiritual influence in my life. A devoted member of the Missionary Baptist Church, she brought me up to attend Sunday school and Baptist Training Union. She encouraged me to learn piano, and I played for Sunday school. Later I became a faithful member of the church choir. My mom was a seeker of the deeper things of God and was open to learning from people who attended other churches and believed different doctrines. Some of her friends invited us to a local Pentecostal church tent meeting where I first became acquainted with the supernatural power and work of the Holy Spirit. There I made a deeper commitment to God and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

*Great is your faithfulness, Great is your faithfulness.
Morning by morning new mercies I see.*

A visit to Ghana leads Regina to hear a call to give...

In the summer of 1996, when I first traveled to Ghana and the Ivory Coast, I had an epiphany—a God moment—with an overwhelming feeling that God want-

ed me to do something for the children and the poor in Ghana. I served as a senior community relations specialist at FedEx Corporation and was responsible for FedEx volunteer and community outreach programs, so I initiated a collection of school supplies and books with 13 local businesses and churches in Memphis, and we shipped nine pallets of goods. I then started a ministry in my church, Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, called the ARMS ministry (Ambassadors Responding to Missions through Service). In collaboration with a Campus Crusade for Christ ministry that focuses on “sending people of color to serve a world of color,” we facilitated youth mission trips for evangelistic outreach in South Africa and Ghana.

*All I have needed your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness, God unto me.*

Regina connects with Global Ministries...

Upon my return from Ghana, I contacted Global Ministries to learn what mission is all about and what opportunities existed. No positions were available in my “heart throb” country, Ghana, nor were any positions available elsewhere for which I qualified. I still had three years of seminary to go, so I was encouraged to get back in touch if I was still interested after graduation. Immediately after I graduated and was ordained, I received an urgent mission request bulletin from someone I barely knew who sent it to me with a note attached that said, “ thought you might be interested in

this.” A position in Ghana that I actually qualified for was posted. Feeling that it was more than mere coincidence and that God was trying to tell me something, I applied! The rest, as they say, is history.

*Pardon for sin and a peace so enduring,
Your own dear presence to cheer and to guide.*

Serving in Ghana—the rewards and challenges Regina has met along the way...

I serve the Christian Council of Ghana as Communications and Programme Associate and am responsible for the Council’s publications (newsletters, brochures, etc.) and facilitate workshops on evangelism, corruption, communication and Bible study... virtually whatever I have been asked to do. I also work with people living with HIV/AIDS and serve as an associate pastor at the Baptist International Church.

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I am most rewarded by being able to contribute positively on committees bringing about changes that affect the lives of people for good. I also enjoy helping to build the capacities of people by teaching them new skills or sharing new information. This is a giving and receiving experience, as I have learned and grown twice as much as I've helped others.

The most challenging aspects of my work arise because the organizations I serve struggle financially. "We don't have money-oh!" has become a common mantra of Ghanaians, and too often it is true. Things that American office workers take for granted—like toilet paper, soap and typing paper—can be difficult to come by. Because of the low cash flow, things have had to be put on hold.

*You do not change, your compassions they fail not;
all of your goodness forever will be.*

Regina finds strength in shared spiritual disciplines...

My husband and I together read the daily selections in the *Bible in a Year* which we then reflect on and discuss. Daily times of prayer together and regular times of fasting (primarily as a church body) have been very rewarding.

*Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!*

Meeting Jesus face-to-face...

I met a woman visiting the Christian Council of Ghana's Relief Unit. A refugee, she had been forced to leave her home in Sierra Leone three years earlier. She explained how she and her husband, a diplomat, and children had lived comfortably and happily before the war, how she watched soldiers murder her husband and children by cutting their bodies into pieces and burn her home down... how she and her remaining children fled Sierra Leone with only the clothing on their back... how they walked for hundreds of miles through rough terrain, sometimes not knowing from where their next meal would come... how after they reached Ghana, she became terribly ill, grew lean, became unable to walk or talk... how God in God's sovereign mercy raised her up. When we met, she was

relatively well, gaining weight and working. Humbly, her words always acknowledged her love, affection and adoration for the loving God who had preserved her life and brought her through such trying circumstances. This was the day that I met Jesus face-to-face... in the face of this woman, God's servant, even "the least of God's little ones."

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. – 2 Corinthians 9:8

Questions for Reflection

- Regina speaks of receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What does this phrase mean to you? How do you identify with Regina's experience?
- Regina describes her call by Global Ministries to serve in Ghana as "more than mere coincidence." When have things occurred in your life in such a way that you have felt the hand of God at work?
- Regina speaks of regular fasting as a church community. When do you fast, as an individual or as a community? What role does fasting play in your faith and witness?

Prayer Opportunities

- Pray for Regina and Prince and their ministries in Ghana.
- Pray for the Christian Council of Ghana, especially the work of its Relief Unit with refugees.
- Pray for families of all descriptions, that they might be filled with love and respect for all members.
- All the missionaries serving around the world and supported by the United Church of Christ through Global Ministries.

* "Great Is Your Faithfulness," William Runyan, 1923, #423 (altered) in *The New Century Hymnal*, The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1995.