A Comparative Study of the Social Welfare Provided by Three Christian Churches in Accra, Ghana

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Abstract
The family is the first and oldest provider of social welfare in the West African country of Ghana. However, colonisation and urbanisation has changed that role and today additional providers of social welfare can be found; the government, religious organisations (churches etc), non-religious organisations and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

This study will confirm the claim that the church takes on a role as a surrogate family and that it steps in where the government is not present, doing social work which is intended for the government. The study will also investigate what kind of social work the churches carry out (including what they put their focus on, which is dependent on their finance and location) and how these different projects are financed.

The study was conducted during a six week period in Accra, capital of Ghana. Representatives from three Christian congregations (Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Kaneshie, Global Evangelical Church in Kotobabi and International Central Gospel Church in Teshie) were interviewed, as was Dr. Ayidiya at the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana, in order to get background information on the present social welfare system in Ghana.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

With 93.3 per cent of Ghana’s population claiming to belong to a religion and 69 per cent of these belonging to Christianity¹, Ghana is an interesting country to conduct a study about Christianity in. After at least 1300 years of foreign influence, as an important base of trade and as a colony (by both the Mediterranean Muslims and the Christian Portuguese, Danes, British and Dutch), the country (including its religion) has been coloured.² The missionaries brought Christianity to Ghana, but as Meyer notes: “African Christianity is not merely an extension of the missionary impact, but a product of the encounter between missionaries and Africans.”³ Ghana has evolved its own Christianity, with influences from both western and indigenous traditions.

Although Ghana had one of Africa’s most thriving economies at its time of independence from the British colonial rule in 1957, political instability, economic mismanaging (including corruption and wastefulness of the country’s finances) and the fall of crop prices made the economy very weak.⁴ The Ghanaian government joined the World Bank’s Economic Recovery Program in the beginning of the 1980s. Although poverty has been reduced from 52 per cent to 28.5 per cent during the past fifteen years⁵, more then one fourth of Ghana’s population still cannot afford (or live in areas lacking) basic human resources such as clean water, education and health care. The government is the main provider of social welfare, but other providers include Non-Governmental Organisations and religious assemblies (including Christian churches). The family has been an important provider of social welfare since historical times, but with urbanisation that role has shifted from the family to a new surrogate family, often being a religious organization.⁶ This study attempts to investigate that shift and also what kind of social welfare that is carried out by churches.

1.1.1 Personal Background

The topic of the research, social work within Christian churches, derived from my personal interest in how religions affect society and people’s day to day life.

There were several reasons as to why the research was conducted in Ghana. My personal reason was that I for a long time had had an interest in Africa and its culture (including its religions), but previously had not gotten the opportunity to travel there. Practical reasons included Ghana being politically stable, Anglophone and that a collaboration had previously been established between the two departments of religious studies at the University of Gävle and the University of Ghana (which provided valuable connections for the research). Out of a researcher’s perspective Ghana is a suitable country to conduct research on Christianity and social welfare in as it can be considered a religious country: not only does a high percentage of the population belong to Christianity, it is also an important part of Ghanaian society and something that is largely expressed. African Christianity also differs slightly from Western Christianity, as it was not introduced until a couple of hundreds of years ago and has been mixed with traditional African beliefs. The current financial situation in Ghana (more information in section 2.3) also makes it an interesting country to study social welfare in. Coming from Sweden, a highly secularised country, I found it interesting to experience the different relationship the church and the government has in Ghana as compared to Scandinavia.

¹ Omenyo, 2006, p.25
² Briggs, 2004, p.7
³ Meyer, 1995, p.1
⁴ Briggs, 2004, p.25f, 32
⁵ The World Bank, 2007
⁶ Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007 & Kodaah, 2004, p.76
Being an experienced traveller (having travelled extensively within the Western countries and having lived a total of six years in Australia, Great Britain and the United States of America), I am accustomed to meeting and adapting to new cultures. However, this being my first visit to Africa, I did not know what to anticipate physically, mentally and emotionally. Regardless of the literature one reads about a country and how many people share their experiences of the country, one is never prepared for the emotions that arise in a culture that differs much from one's own. Most of the time when travelling the *clash* in cultures turns into *meeting* of cultures. This is one of the many joys of travelling. Travelling alone and as a researcher, rather than as a tourist, changed the way I interacted with people. It might also have changed their deception about me. It cannot be stated enough how important my field assistant was not only for my study, but also for my integration into the Ghanaian society. Through my field assistant and her family and friends I got to experience the Ghanaian way of life first hand. This made me comprehend the Ghanaian society better, hence better understanding the need and structure of Ghanaian social welfare. Coming from a far secularised country and visiting a highly religious one, where personal beliefs (especially Christianity) is very perceptible and vibrant, this research also gave me the opportunity to experience and better comprehend a strong Christian lifestyle.

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the research is to study the social responsibility of three Christian churches in Accra, capital of Ghana in West Africa, both amongst its members and the community.

The following questions will be answered in this study:

- What kind of social welfare do the churches provide?
- How are the different projects financed?
- Why should the churches be involved in social welfare?

1.3 Method

The study was carried out during a period of six weeks in Accra, the capital of Ghana in West Africa. The main methods used were interviews and observation through participation.

Reverend Professor Elom Dovlo at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, was my contact on location. He assigned me a Ghanaian field assistant, former student at the department Ms. Alberta Dwamena.

Three Christian churches were selected for this study, all located in Accra: the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) in Kaneshie, the Global Evangelical Church (GEC) in Kotobabi and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), Hosanna Temple, in Teshie. They were selected because of their location, historical background, size and the fact that they all are established. Representatives from each church were interviewed regarding the church and the social welfare they provide. The two pastors (Rev. Charles Ahwireng of the PCG, Pastor Eric Xexemeku of the ICGC) and one catechist (Mrs. Elizabeth Hamenu of the GEC) are the primary informants. Secondary informants include representatives from various groups and committees dealing with welfare within the churches.

In order to get more familiar with the churches their Sunday services were attended. In the cases with the PCG and the GEC, where there were two services available, the ones in English (being the first out of the two) were chosen for coherence.

Since there are limited resources available on Ghana’s present social structure and social welfare, Dr. Stephen Ayidiya of the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, was interviewed in order to get a better understanding on these topics.

The historic hermeneutic theory of science was used in the research, as the research deals with interpreting facts by human encounters (in this case through interviews). The hermeneutic circle was also approached. In order to understand the social welfare the
churches conduct (including the reason why they conduct it), it is necessary to understand the 

social welfare provided in the Ghanaian society as a whole.7

1.3.1 Implications

An implication when basing research on interviews is the fact that, no matter how many 

questions are asked or how the questions are formulated, the person being interviewed decides 

what information is given to the researcher and hence what information becomes available for 

the final result and analysis. Different deceptions between the researcher and the person being 

interviewed of what social welfare is may in this research alter the result, as the person 

interviewed may not include information because he or she did not find it relevant. Details 

may, for various reasons, also be excluded by the person being interviewed. The 

representatives from the churches included in this study spoke more eagerly about the success 

of the social work they had provided, than the times they had failed (if it had in fact ever 

occurred) or the welfare they choose not to be involved in. However, this study does not deal 

with the social work the churches are not doing but the work they in fact are doing. Further 

research could focus on the implications of the churches’ social work, if they are doing 

anything wrong and how their welfare work could be improved.

The researcher’s performance and sense of reliability during the interview is another matter 

that will determine what kind of response the researcher will receive. The fact that this 

researcher is a Caucasian European woman in her early twenties most likely gave the people 

being interviewed an impression different from the one they would have received had the 

researcher been a native. It cannot, however, be claimed that the result would have been of 

either lesser or higher quality had the researcher been a native Ghanaian. A letter of 

recommendation from the contact at the University of Ghana and the presence of the 

Ghanaian field assistant gave authenticity to the interviews.

2 Background Information

2.1 Ghana, an Introduction

The Republic of Ghana, which before its independence as a Britain colony in 1957 was 

known as the Gold Coast, is situated by the coast in West Africa. The population, 

approximately twenty three million people, live on an area approximately half the size of 

Sweden. The capital is Accra.8

Ghana’s national economy is based mainly on the production and export of minerals 

(mainly gold, hence the country’s colonial name) and crops (mainly cocoa). Other major 

sectors of economical importance are tourism, fishing and forestry.9

Ghana has a religious pluralism, due to the fact that people with different beliefs, 

missionaries and traders, have mixed with indigenous ones. The religion with most adherents 

in Ghana today is Christianity, which approximately 69 per cent of the total population claim 

to belong to. The second largest religion is Islam, with approximately 15.6 per cent adherents, 

followed by African Traditional Religions (8.5 per cent), other religions (0.7 per cent) and 
those claiming not to belong to any religion (6.2 per cent).10

2.2 Christianity in Ghana

Christianity was introduced to Ghana in the late fifteenth century by Roman Catholic friars, 

who sailed with Portuguese merchants. Their Christian beliefs did, however, not have any 
significant impact on the native people, who confessed to traditional African beliefs at the

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7 Sjöström, 2006, p. 82ff
8 Central Intelligence Agency The World Facebook, 2007
10 Omenyo, 2006, p.25
time (a tradition that a small percentage of Ghanaians still confess to until this very day). The few convertants that were made amongst the indigenous people were believed to have converted for material reasons (i.e. for the new weapons etc the white people possessed) rather than spiritual ones. Several other European countries (including Germany, Britain and Sweden) set up forts along the coast and with them the first Protestant missionaries arrived in 1618. However, it was not until four decades later that Christianity started to flourish in southern Ghana, mainly through Protestant missions, and later on spread throughout the country. Apart from Christianity flourishing in Ghana at the time, so was the slave trade. Sweden was, along with other European countries and indigenous tribes, active in the trading of humans to the colonies on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean. The Swedish African Company was active in Ghana between 1649-1658 and 1660-1663 (between this time it was taken over by the Danish) and its mission was to trade in gold, ivory and slaves for financial purposes. In 1663 the Dutch conquered the Swedish trading posts and Sweden temporally stopped their trade in Africa. The Swedes did not return to West Africa until 1786, when Sweden used slave labour in their Caribbean colony Saint Barthélemy, in order to make it profitable. The trade in slaves was officially abolished in Ghana in 1833.

At present, the largest Christian groups in Ghana are the Pentecostal / Charismatic (24.1 per cent of the 69 per cent Christians), Protestant (18.6 per cent), Catholic (15.3 per cent) and miscellaneous Christian groups (11 per cent). Today several types of Christian denominations can be found in Ghana. Omenyo has divided them into five categories: Mainline (Historic) Churches (originating from the missions, of western origin and financial support), African Independent Churches (indigenous origin and financial support, mainly founded in the beginning of the twentieth century), Classical Pentecostal Churches (the oldest Pentecostal churches dating back from the 1910s, of western roots), Neo- Evangelical / Mission-related Churches (Evangelic churches with western ties from the 1940s, mostly found in northern Ghana) and Neo-Pentecostal / Charismatic Churches (charismatic churches which started to appear during the 1980s, some of which have their roots in the west).

The charismatic churches have had great impact on the mainline churches. Unlike the beginning of the mainline churches, where new members had converted from the traditional religions, the charismatic churches’ members are Christians with their origins from mainline or African Independent Churches. The mainline denominations thus added charismatic features into their churches in order to stop the decreasing of members. Some members, often whole groups, who left the mainline church formed own charismatic denominations, as seen with the Global Evangelical Church.

A couple of key differences between the mainline and charismatic churches is the focus on personal accomplishment, the liveliness of worships, the importance of the Bible, the importance of tithing and the often lack of social-political engagement, since it is believed that God solves problems (for example a person’s or a country’s economical problems) and not man, making prayers and contributions to the church more encouraged than dealing with the problem on a non-spiritual level. The tradition of tithing within the charismatic churches has its background in the colonial era. While the missionary churches received money from either their native church or from the government, the charismatic churches were left to find their own finances (as is the case for all religious organisations in Ghana today). Tithing is legitimised through the Bible (Josh 7.21-25). The conception to give (to the church, God’s

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11 Omenyo, 2006, p.45ff
12 Nationalencyklopedin #1, 1989, Afrikanska kompaniet, p.99f
13 Nationalencyklopedin #16, 1995, Slavhandel, p.617
14 Omenyo, 2006, p.35
15 Ibid., p.34ff
16 Gifford, 2004, p.38, 186
representative) in order to receive prosperity is common in Ghana, not only within the Catholic church which is well-known for this value. The custom to use tithe actively came both abroad from faith gospels in the United States of America and from within Ghana through African traditional religions.\textsuperscript{17}

2.2.1 Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG)
The mainline Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) has its origin in the Basel Evangelical Mission Society from Switzerland, who arrived in Ghana in 1828. They did not belong to any particular denomination, although they had most connections with Lutheran and Reformed churches. A small number of Basel missionaries were sent to Ghana in three turns and all but one of the missionaries died from indigenous diseases within a couple of years of arrival (as affected all missions to tropical Africa). The mission stationed itself in the Akwapim Hills, close to Accra, where there were less mosquitoes to spread deceases. This did, however, not help the missionaries health, nor was it the ideal place to teach Christianity on (there are no recorded convertants from the period). Two decades later missionaries arrived from the West Indies, who proved to be more resistant to the tropical diseases, and made the youth their new target group, instead of adults who the previous missionaries had put their focus on. This proved to be a success as converts were made and the mission eventually expanded outside the Akwapim Hills.\textsuperscript{18}

The church received its current name in 1926, although it was then known as the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast until the country’s independence and change of name. In 2004 the church had half a million members in approximately 2,900 congregations, seventeen of these outside Ghana in Europe and North America.\textsuperscript{19}

The church has been well-known for its social work, especially within the educational sector. It was first with establishing a college in Ghana (in 1848), a school for the blind (1934) and later a school for the deaf and dumb (1957). The church has kept its tradition within the educational sector and ran, in 2003, 1,907 schools (most of them being primary schools) maintaining almost 300,000 pupils and 11,400 teachers. The Basel missionaries also founded health clinics and, in 2003, the PCG was in charge of 35 health programmes (including hospitals, clinics, a nurses training college etc). The PCG is the third largest health care provider in Ghana today (covering 9 per cent of the total amount), after the governmental Ministry of Health and the Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{20}

The PCG in Kaneshie was founded in 1957. It has approximately 3,000 members (making it one of the largest PCG churches in the area) and has 900-1,000 people attending their two Sunday services each week (with an additional 500-600 children attending Sunday school). Their members are spread across Accra. Kaneshie was a rich area in the past with a lot of estates being built there. However it has gone from being regarded as an outer city community to an inner city one and does not have the same high standing as it once did.\textsuperscript{21}

2.2.2 Global Evangelical Church (GEC)
The Global Evangelical Church (GEC) is a fine example of a mainline church that has gone through a charismatic renewal. It has its roots in the North German Missionary Society, also known as the Bremen Mission. They established their mission among the Peki, in what is today south-eastern Ghana and south-western Togo, in 1847. By establishing contact with the Peki king through his son, a student of the Basel Mission, the Bremen mission was well

\textsuperscript{17} Gifford, 2004, p.30, 61ff, 70, 78ff, 139, 146f, 195
\textsuperscript{18} Beeko, 2004, p.2ff & Omenyo, 2006, p.53
\textsuperscript{19} Beeko, 2004, p.11f
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.24ff, 45
\textsuperscript{21} Interview Rev. Ahwireng, 14th September 2007
received. However, the indigenous people were primarily not interested in the religion the missions came to preach, but the goods they had with them and the trade the missionaries had established with the coast. Due to financial difficulties and war amongst the indigenous people, the mission had to leave the area in different turns. They transferred to the coast, to an area inhabited by Ewe tribes, where they had larger success in converting the local people. Just as the Basel Mission, the Bremen Mission built western schools and health clinics. With the outbreak of World War I, however, all Germans were forced to leave the British colony. Both the Bremen and the Basel Mission gave joint responsibility over the two missions to the United Free Church of Scotland, which was already well settled in Africa. They introduced the Presbyterian Church’s government system and the establishment of secondary education. The Basel Mission became autonomous in 1923 and took the new name Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). In the 1960s the church was losing members to the charismatic churches, as these were seen to fill the African spiritual need better than the western oriented mainline churches. In order to prevent this exodus of members, a decade later the EPC “Africanisised” the church by introducing liturgical changes (allowing African music being integrated with the traditional hymns) and a more expressive way of worship. The Bible Study and Prayer Fellowship (BSPF), a group entirely relying on the teachings of the Bible and on prayers, was formed as a way to meet the members’ spiritual needs. When attempting to combine the African traditions into the church the EPC’s Moderator, Professor Noah K. Dzobo, presented a new theology. The BSPF were the strongest opponents to Dzobo’s ideas, which after conflicts (both theological and political) led to a split within the church in 1991. The church which stood behind Dzobo kept the name EPC, whilst the other church added ‘of Ghana’ to the original name. The latter took on charismatic features and is today known by the name Global Evangelical Church. Both churches claim to be the rightful descendent from the original mission church.

According to the GEC’s official website, the church has approximately 100,000 members belonging to 610 congregations in Ghana. The church also has branches abroad, in Europe, the United States of America and other African countries.

The GEC in Kotobabi was founded in 1991. It has approximately 3,000 members, with 1600-1800 people attending their two Sunday services each week (with an additional 800-1000 children attending Sunday school). Their members reside all over Accra. The church has twenty full time staff and nine part time staff. Kotobabi is a middle standard area, with people coming from all over Ghana and belonging to different tribes.

2.2.3 International Central Gospel Church (ICGC)
The charismatic International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) does not, unlike the two previous denominations, have its roots within the missionary churches. It was founded in Accra in 1984 by the Ghanaian pastor Dr. Mensa Otabil (born in 1960). Otabil was born into the Anglican Church, but before confessing his faith to his ICGC he had belonged to various other charismatic churches. Unlike other charismatic church pastors, who generally put more emphasis on spiritual healing than on practical social questions, Otabil is an advocate for social change and political attention. Through regular television- and radio shows, Otabil spreads his thoughts well outside the ICGC and preaches not only about Christian values but also about socio-political topics such as how Ghana should modify its culture (criticizing old African values) in order to grow economically. However, the connection to God is present

22 Omenyo, 2006, p.59f  
23 Meyer, 1995, p.59ff, 75  
24 Omenyo, 2006, p.61ff  
25 Meyer, 1995, p.194-201  
26 Global Evangelical Church, 2007  
27 Interview Mrs. Hamenu, 18th September 2007
even during political preaching. Through “the power of the gospel” Otabil finds it possible for
the people of Africa to change their behaviour, their values, and hence change their situation
as poor under-developed countries. Since the ICGC did not evolve out of a mainline church
Otabil can criticize society and talk about social change without the same fear the mainline
churches have, with their background in the missionaries’ and colonialists’ forced on change
of the Ghanaian culture centuries ago.  

Although the denomination is not an old one, the ICGC has long been actively involved in
social welfare. Gifford 29 claims that the church has had its target on the elite and that this has
resulted in that the church’s charity concert on Christmas Eve each year raises a large sum of
money for the church’s social welfare work. The ICGC’s main social focus has been within
the health- and educational sector. In 1988 Otabil founded a training college for pastors,
Central University College, the first privately owned college in Ghana. The denomination
runs the NGO Central Aid (also founded in 1988) which is, according to the ICGC’s official
website, “now considered the largest non-governmental scholarship programme for students
in pre-tertiary education in Ghana”. 30

In 2004 it was estimated that the ICGC had approximately one hundred churches in Ghana
(with seven thousand people attending services at the main church in Accra every Sunday)
and five churches abroad (in North America, Europe and Africa). 31

The ICGC Hosanna Temple in Teshie was founded in 1997. It has approximately 1,200
members and the same amount attending Sunday service each week (approximately 350 of
these being children, all attending Sunday school). Approximately 80 per cent of the members
reside in Teshie, the rest in other parts of Accra (as far away as East Legon and Achimota).
Hosanna Temple has six full time employees and one part time employee. 32 The present
resident pastor’s relation to Otabil is evident as the pastor claims to “[submit] to Dr. Mensa
Otabil … as his Spiritual father and primary source of inspiration, leadership and guidance in
life and ministry”. 33

2.3 Social Welfare in Ghana
Social welfare in Ghana is provided by the government (mainly through the Department of
Social Welfare), Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), non-religious organisations,
religious organisations and the family / community. The NGOs tend to focus more on
development work, whilst the non-religious organisations focus on philanthropy / charity, i.e.
relief work. Some religious organisations focus on both development and relief work, whilst
others focus entirely on the latter. 34

The first providers of social welfare in Ghana were the families within the different tribes
that reigned in the country. Traders and colonialists changed society for the indigenous people
and missionaries took the part of offering social services for the new and unfamiliar problems
that arose during the encounter. As already mentioned, the missionaries primary target was to
spread Christianity and one way in doing so was through establishing schools, in order for the
people to be able to read the religious texts. As Christianity also has a long history regarding
health and relief work, health clinics were established. 35

The social work the Christian denominations have provided, especially within the health
and educational sectors, has had great impact on Ghana. Gifford claims that:

28 Gifford, 2004, p.113ff, 124ff
29 Ibid. p.115
30 Hosanna Temple, 2007
31 Gifford, 2004, p.114
32 Interview Rev. Xexemeku, 2007
33 Hosanna Temple, 2007
34 Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
35 Cromwell Hill, 1962, p.43
The mainline churches have been of considerable significance in building the modern nation, particularly through their schools, to an extent probably unequalled in Africa.36

One of the ways in which this occurred, Gifford argues37, was through the indigenous elite that arose from educating indigenous people at university level. These people got a voice and the power to become politically active, which led to Ghana’s independence in 1957. The wives of the government officials established the first NGOs, targeting certain venerable groups of society; the blind, women, youth etc.38

2.3.1 Definition & Goal
In this study the definition for what social work is, has been based on the American National Association of Social Workers’ definition:

Social work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups or communities to enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favourable to its goal.39

Berg-Weger40 considers the goal of social work to be “to empower people to optimize their abilities and quality in life, whether through working directly with people or through taking action to change society” and finds that the definition’s flexibility makes it possible for adaptation and to meet different communities’ demands. Hence both the definition and the goal are the same regardless if the community is situated in a developed country like America or in an underdeveloped one like Ghana.

2.3.2 The Church, NGOs and the Government
The government is the largest single provider of social welfare. The Department of Social Welfare is responsible for all social welfare questions which are governmentally funded in Ghana.41

Non Governmental Organisations are organisations which are neither run nor financed by the government.42 These can be either local or international. Unlike the government, NGOs can choose to be very narrow in the people or causes they provide social welfare for. The government is not able to “pick and choose” in this way, but must see to the need of the country’s residents as a whole. However, there are certain groups that the government puts extra focus on, because they are seen as venerable for the country’s future. The main group is children (from birth to eighteen years of age), providing them with health care and offering them education. They are protected according to the Children’s Act 1998. Focus is also put on women’s and the youth’s reproductive health. Certain geographical communities are seen as more venerable then others and hence receive the government’s extra attention. Such communities are the rural communities (especially in northern Ghana) and Accra’s inner city communities (for example Nima and Madina).43

It has been claimed that “when an NGO steps in, the government steps out”44, meaning that NGOs take over a responsibility originally assigned to the government and that the government has no objections in stepping down when this occurs. Ayidiya45 states that a reason for this conception is that the government lacks resources and has too much

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36 Gifford, 2004, p.20
37 Gifford, 1998, p.57f
38 Cromwell Hill, 1962, p.43
40 Berg-Weger, 2005, p.4
41 Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
42 Nationalencyklopedin, 2007
43 Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
44 Ibid. Also claimed by Van de Walle & Johnston, 1996, p.28
45 Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
bureaucracy. NGOs are more visible because they can, as already mentioned, “pick and choose” causes and are also quicker in sending aid. Van de Walle and Johnston\textsuperscript{46} also note that NGOs, over all, are more effective and that they receive the people’s trust more often than the government does, mainly because NGOs are seen as meeting local needs better and being more flexible and committed to their cause. However, the “pick and choose” approach results in the government forcing to deal with social issues not covered by NGOs. Ayidiya\textsuperscript{47} gives an example in crime, which is escalating in Ghana, and which no NGO is concerned with. This leaves the government as the single protagonist to deal with the problem.

Bauswein and Vischer\textsuperscript{48} draw similar parallels between the church and the government, although they choose to call their relationship “one of close collaboration in the fields of … social services”. They claim that the Christian council of Ghana has a “prophetic role in the defence of human rights, freedom of worship, democracy, and moral standards”. Nwagwu\textsuperscript{49} also mentions the church as a defender of morality, where the church’s involvement in social welfare (especially regarding the poor) should be seen as something obvious for them.

Education in Ghana is provided by both the government (through public schools either free of tuition fees or subsidised, depending on the level), churches (through privately run religious schools) and NGOs (through their own privately run schools). Primary education is, as stated in Ghana’s constitution, compulsory. However, it is not enforced and hence there are children in Ghana who do not attend school. Parents struggling with their economy sometimes choose, even though it is against the law, to keep their children out of school as they are a source of income through child labour.\textsuperscript{50} As also stated by Jackson\textsuperscript{51}, even though the tuition is free of charge to public schools there are other expenses that a child will have when attending school, such as uniforms, meals, transportation etc. Another reason why poor parents may choose not to send their children to school is because the quality of education at public schools is very low and the parents cannot afford sending their children to a private school, where the education is of higher quality. Annual objective measures, issued by the Minister of Education and the Ghana Education Service, measure the quality of education given in schools. There have been instances where whole districts (with between thirty to ninety schools) fail several years in succession. When children are not able to read or write, even though they are attending school, parents can find it a waste of the children’s time going to school instead of learning the parents’ trades, leading to a more visible income.\textsuperscript{52}

The child’s future is not always brightened by attending a public school. Although tertiary education at state universities is heavily subsidised, because the quality of education at public schools is low only a minority of pupils reach up to the standards to attend post-graduate studies.\textsuperscript{53} Manford\textsuperscript{54} points out that another problem that has arisen is the fact that the government’s funding for post-graduate education since independence has not been equivalent with the population growth in Ghana. As more students are qualifying for tertiary education, because of an increase in population, the competition increases.

Health care is given by the same providers as with education; mainly the government, churches and NGOs. At the time of independence the government of Ghana provided free health care for its citizens. This, however, proved to be to costly and it was taken away. At present Ghana has a newly instated health insurance system, which should ensure everyone health care. According to Ayidiya\textsuperscript{55}, problems that has arisen with this new system is that

\textsuperscript{46} Van de Walle & Johnston, 1996, p.28f
\textsuperscript{47} Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
\textsuperscript{48} Bauswein & Vischer, 1999, p.191
\textsuperscript{49} Nwagwu, 2002, p.64ff
\textsuperscript{50} Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
\textsuperscript{51} Jackson, 2001, p.73
\textsuperscript{52} Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Manford, 2002, p.91
\textsuperscript{55} Interview Dr. Ayidiya, 2007
privately run health care providers and pharmacies are making huge claims which is emptying the pot. Health insurance fraud is also a growing problem.

2.3.3 The Family Group
The very first provider of social welfare, and who is still important in this matter, is the family. Well before the missionaries came to what is now the Republic of Ghana, the country was divided into tribal communities. The sense of group belonging, and hence responsibility for one another, was very strong within the community. The family or lineage provided social support, both physical and mental, when an individual was in need of it. Urbanization has weakened the family ties, which has put larger pressure on the other providers of social welfare. As for the churches, this weakening in family ties has changed their role in society. They replace the family role when it comes to both mental- and financial support.

3 Results
3.1 Social Welfare within the Three Churches
Abbreviations of the denomination will from here on be used when mentioning the local church (i.e. the place name will not be attached to it). This is done in order to make the text more coherent. Where nothing else is stated, the information is based on the interviews conducted with the representatives of the churches.

The main focus within all three churches lies on meeting the social needs of the members, both through mental and financial support. Both positive and negative happenings in life are dealt with by the church, such as birth, marriage, hospitalization, death, widowhood, sudden disability and unemployment. The church can contribute with financial support both by paying the member’s bills or through donations. The size of the donation depends on the situation, but seems to range from GHS 10 (which is the amount the Women’s Ministry at the GEC donates to the family of a dead member) to GHS 150 (given to a deceased member’s spouse within the PCG).

All three churches are funded by their members, no governmental contributions are given to religious organisations in Ghana. The PCG is the only church in the study which does not have a membership fee, i.e. is completely dependent on their members’ contributions. Apart from taking offerings during gatherings (the PCG and the GEC take two offerings at their Sunday services, the second one going to their welfare accounts) and tithe, all three churches arrange special events to raise money. The PCG and the GEC have annual harvests, an idea which goes back a long way in time. People would bring their crops to church at the end of the year. With the change of lifestyle today, people donate money instead of crops.

Special contributions are made during services to the church’s welfare schemes. Pastor Xexemeku reflects that the donations made towards social welfare is “more members contributing and saving money for the day of trouble”. Rev. Ahwireng notes that the charismatic churches receive more money than the mainline ones do. He considers that the members of the PCG do not give enough money to the church.

Apart from financial assistance, the churches also offer mental support through hospital and home visits. Representatives from the church are also present at funerals. Should the funeral take place in another town, transportation is often arranged for the members attending the funeral.

All three churches have groups specializing in different activities, for example choirs, bands and Bible studies. These attract people of different age, background and social standing. Apart

56 Cromwell Hill, 1962, p.43ff
57 Koduah, 2004, p.76
58 GHS 1 = 6,59 SEK, USS 1,04, € 0,71 on November 29th 2007, Oanda
59 Application of Funeral Benefits to Members, PCG Kaneshie, 2007
from being mental support, all groups are (more or less) involved within welfare. Two of the largest and most influential groups within the churches are the gender specific men’s and women’s groups, called Fellowships within the PCG and Ministries within the GEC and the ICGC. The Women’s and Men’s Fellowships / Ministries work more out of a gender perspective than their main churches and other groups do. None of the churches have specific programs / activities for a specific sex, all cater for both sexes although it, through observation, seemed as though certain groups attracted more of the one sex than others did (there were for example no female musicians observed during any of the five Sunday services attended). The main purposes of the fellowships / ministries are to teach its members more about God and the Bible and to create a sense of belonging within the church. The social welfare is primarily aimed at individual members within the groups, through support and donations, and only a minority of the effort and finance is put into other projects.

Both the female and male representatives within the churches agree that the women’s groups are the strongest and most powerful ones. The reasons go apart as to why that is. The male representatives from the GEC claimed the reason to be the fact that the Women’s Ministry is older and thus more established (the Women’s Ministry being fifteen years old, as compared to the Men’s Ministry being seven years old). The difference in age also applies to the Fellowships within the PCG. The reason given by the female representative of the GEC was that women easier connect with God since men (through their superior role over all living creatures) are too proud beings. The male representative of the fellowship within the PCG found the reason to be that women are more social beings than men and the female representative within the PCG finds women to be better at organizing and taking initiative (since they are used to doing so when being responsible for a household).

3.1.1 Social Welfare within the PCG Kaneshie

The PCG has ten different activity groups, all which conduct their own welfare work: two bands, three choirs, two youth groups, a Bible Study & Prayer Group and the already mentioned fellowships. One representative from each group forms the welfare committee, which caters for the whole church. Apart from receiving the second offering during the two Sunday services each week, the committee receives ten per cent of the church’s annual income and has an annual harvest. The committee hosts an annual party for all its members on Christmas Day, free for all the church’s members and during which no offerings are taken. A similar party is held for the senior members (seventy years and older) at the end of October each year.

Rev. Ahwireng points out that the church is no charitable organisation, but that it is their responsibility that the members are taken care of. When a member requests a donation each case is reviewed by the welfare committee. People who lack other options are especially cared for. Rev. Ahwireng gives an example of a member with kidney problems. The member had to have a dialysis done almost every day and the church paid GHS 1000 to cover the expenses.

The PCG is the only church in the study that run their own school. The Kaneshie Presbyterian School was founded in 1984 and caters for children from preparatory school to lower secondary school. The school has 550 pupils at present, although they are building another floor to the school building which will able the school to cater for more pupils.

The pastor occasionally personally helps members, outside the church’s welfare scheme. As with social welfare coming from the church, receiving help from the pastor does not necessarily involve money but can also be his time and care. Rev. Ahwireng has encouraged and helped people, through his contacts, to gain admittance to tertiary school. These people, he claims, would not have gone to school without the encouragement and help.

The PCG considers the greatest concern today to be drop-outs, i.e. pupils who finish secondary school but do not continue with tertiary education. Rev. Ahwireng sees it as his
“greatest concern that … people are frustrated and the devil finds work for the idle hand”. The PCG provide evening classes for pupils in secondary school, in order for them to pass their final exams. The church pays for the teachers and provides a place to conduct the lessons at. They also offer scholarships for higher education. If the church were to receive more funding, they would put even more resources on drop-outs.

Although the church collects tithe and collectings during gatherings (which, through observation during two Sunday services, seemed to be GHS 1 per person and offering), the major source of income is the church’s annual harvest. During last years harvest the PCG received GHS 60,000. Rev. Ahwireng is, however, not pleased with this sum. The church is living in its past glory, when the area (and hence also its inhabitants) was richer the church received higher contributions. According to the Reverend the members do not understand this and are, in his opinion, giving to little to the church. He also finds today’s members to be less active than during the church’s glory years.

In the past the PCG had a welfare scheme where “financially handicapped” members received money from the church, at a total of GHS 6,000. However, the church felt forced to end the scheme as members, even when they got the opportunity, did not have any intention in donating any money back to the cause. At present the PCG offers loans for any member which is in financial, although not desperate, need and where there are other members of the church which can back the person up. Should the loan taker not be able to pay off his or her debt, the other members step in and pay it for him / her.

As the church is celebrating its golden jubilee this year, it is organizing special events during the autumn. Some are social events, such as a children’s fun fair, while others deal with social welfare, for example a free medical care day.

The PCG is the only church in the study to provide social aid to another community then their own. They were invited by the village of Odontia, outside Accra, to settle the various troubles the village was experiencing. Odontia is a poor village with a high unemployment rate. Rev. Ahwireng describes Odontia as an “area of idles”, which has resulted in outbreaks of violence. There was, for example, a lot of fighting in the village which the church was able to mediate. This idleness is the largest challenge for the church and an issue they are putting a lot of focus on. They wish to brighten the villagers’ spirits and work morale. One way in doing this is by setting up a football team for the youth of the village. Another challenge the PCG is facing is the high expectations the village has on them. Rev. Ahwireng feels that the church is expected to perform miracles and to solve all of the village’s problems, which they cannot do.

The church is currently building a school in the village. The children in Odontia are at present forced to walk long distances every day in order to get to their nearest school, situated in another village. This has had a bad impact on their performance in school; during the dry season (which is very hot) they arrive exhausted to school and during the rain season they arrive wet. The PCG also conducts teaching to both adults and children on Sundays. A future goal the church has is digging wells in the village, as the water in Odontia is of very low quality.

Rev. Ahwireng considers the church to be involved in social welfare because it is the responsibility of the church, according to the Bible in Matthew 25:21. Christianity is not simply soul, it has a body as well, i.e. a Christian cannot simply pray for the better good, as God is not a messenger which a person can ask for favours.

3.1.2 Social Welfare within the GEC Kotobabi
Since the church is a large one and with its members residing in various parts of Accra, smaller groups (called home cells) have been established. These cells meet at a member’s home once every week. Should any member be in need of social welfare, the representative
from the group reports this to the church’s welfare committee. By using home cells, the pastor (responsible for the congregation) surveys the need of the church’s 3,000 members more easily.

Every member of the church has a right to receive social welfare by the church when needed. Every adult member also has an obligation to pay a membership fee of GHS 0.5 per month. When a member is in need of social help the church (either the home cell or the welfare office) evaluates the situation and decides what can be done for the person, if he or she should receive a donation or not. How big a donation the member receives when in need depends on his or her performance as a church member; church attendance and participation, contributions (tithe) etc are taken into consideration.

Mrs. Hamenu finds the most important questions within social welfare to be “the physical wellbeing of the members”. Emphasis is put on those who are ill and has no one to care for them or are not able to pay their hospital bills. When cases like these arise, the church steps in and both cares for the person mentally (through hospital visits etc) and economically (by paying their bills etc).

Apart from catering to their fellow member’s needs, the Women’s Ministry works on creating a nicer environment within the church. This includes tiling the men’s and women’s bathrooms (which has already been done) and putting up mosquito nets in them (their future project). Apart from the monthly membership fee of GHS 0.5, the ministry raises money during “Women’s Week”, when they organize special events. Both the Men’s and the Women’s Ministries claim that approximately fifty per cent of their annual income is put on social welfare.

The GEC is the only church in the study which has a collaboration with an NGO. Together with the American Christian organisation Compassion they supply primary school education and health care, at what they call a Child Development Center, for children whose parents cannot afford sending them to school. Two hundred children have been selected to join the project, one hundred from the church and one hundred from outside the church. The centre is financed partly by the church, but mainly by the American sponsors each child receives (donating US$32 per child to Compassion each month).60

Apart from taking offerings during gatherings (Sunday services, group meetings etc), tithe is also collected from the members. The church has an annual Thanksgiving harvest with revivals during the week days. During the harvest appeals are made for different causes.

Mrs. Hamenu considers that the church should be involved in social welfare because “as human beings we have needs and these needs should be catered for”, but adds that the members should not depend solely on the church for social welfare as the GEC does not have the finance.

3.1.3 Social Welfare within the ICGC Teshie

Similar to the GEC, the ICGC has a smaller group system they call covenant families. All members are a part of a family, comprising of 15-25 members living in the same area. They meet once a week in a member’s home. In each group there is a cell leader, an assistant leader and a council. Social issues regarding members are mainly dealt with on a local level. Should that not be enough the situation is taken to the church office (i.e. the pastor).

The ICGC has a membership fee of GHS 0.5 per month. All adult members are also expected to contribute GHS 0.5 per month to the church’s welfare fund, students pay slightly less. Members are, upon receiving their membership, given a pamphlet known as a Welfare Card in order to keep record of their payments to the welfare fund. The pamphlet also has the welfare fund’s aims and regulations. It is cited that the aim of the fund is:

1. To foster the spirit of brotherliness and togetherness among members of the church.

60 Compassion, 2007
2. To demonstrate by practical means, our love and concern for our family members.\textsuperscript{61}

*The Welfare Card* specifies in which situations a member is entitled to receive welfare and what kind of contribution should be provided. Members of the church receive the largest contribution, but people connected to the member (parents, spouse, extended family) might under certain circumstances (for example death) receive a smaller contribution. *The Welfare Card* cites how a member is to inform the church of a social need:

- Members shall inform the International Central Gospel Church-Teshie of any such events, through the covenant family leader or any member of the welfare committee.
- The committee will then meet and take a decision and feedback will be sent to the member.\textsuperscript{62}

Out of all three churches, the ICGC conducts the most local community work. Teshie is a socially divided area, with both a lower middle class and a poor lower class. The church has an annual project related to Teshie, known as its “Christmas gift to the community”. For the past two years the church has worked with the Street Light Project, where ten street lights have been provided for the area (and which they are still responsible for maintaining). This year the church is focusing on water sanitation, which is considered poor in Teshie, which includes buying a reservoir. The projects are mainly funded by a concert, Carols’ Night, held every year on Christmas Eve (a similar event as the main organisation church hosts). All other funding comes from offerings during the services and from the welfare fee.

When choosing a project the church “look[s] at the needs of the community”. The church, especially the Women’s Ministry and the youth group, used to donate money and clothes to the Teshie orphanage for several years, but stopped last year when the orphanage got another sponsor. In the past the church has also financed medical staff and an optician to come to Teshie and provide free medical care and eye screenings.

Pastor Xexemeku regards sanitation to be the most important social welfare question at present in Teshie. Although he considers the situation in the community to have improved, he states that “cleanness cannot be imposed, it has to be from within” and that it is important for the church to set a good example.

A project contemplated, similar to the one the PCG is currently running, is to provide social welfare for a poor village outside Accra. According to Pastor Xexemeku, there are many villages that have been overlooked by other providers of social welfare.

In accordance with the two previous churches, the ICGC have several groups which members can join. Two of these are (out of the churches included in this study) unique to the ICGC, namely the Singles Ministry and the Couples Club. The purpose of the Singles Ministry “is to help singles appreciate their uniqueness and teach them how to make the best out of their lives at this stage” and also to “help members interact” through various events. The Couples Club focuses on the married couples of the church and “advice them on how to handle issues and … run their homes should such storms arise in their homes and … in their marital lives”.\textsuperscript{63}

Pastor Xexemeku feels that the church should be involved in social welfare in order to make the gospel real, in the spirit of Jesus:

> The gospel has to become real and the gospel has to be able to impact on people's lives. If I can preach the best sermons in the world, but I cannot put food on the table for a poor child, to pay a poor child's school fee, then the gospel is not real.

\textsuperscript{61} Welfare Card, Hosanna Temple, ICGC Teshie
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Hosanna Temple, 2007
The pastor mentions that he teaches the church members how to relate to the poor, using the Bible, and that he encourages people to donate what they can. He claims that the members respond very well to this.

4 Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Differences between the Churches

Measuring the amount of social welfare conducted by churches is a complicated matter. Figures over finance can be collected and displayed, however this would not show the amount of commitment (voluntary labour and hours etc) dedicated to the cause. Both of which are needed when carrying out social work. It can also be discussed what type of work should be classified as social work, should re-tiling a church’s bathroom be included? It has in this study, as it can be interpreted as a definition set up by the NASW: “creating societal conditions”. If the church serves as a model for its members, as Pastor Xexemeku wishes it to do, making an impact on and changing the ways of the members, then something as seemingly small and simple like re-tiling a bathroom can reach the goals of social welfare: “to empower people to optimize their abilities and quality in life”. However building a school in a poor village, or paying for a dialysis treatment for failed kidneys, are undoubtedly more obviously defined as welfare work. Not only are they more visible, they can also be seen as more future altering as well (by providing education or keeping a person alive).

All three churches display well thought through and developed projects dealing with social welfare. However, the main welfare is conducted on an individual level. All of the churches display a role as a surrogate family and the welfare of their members is their major concern. In the same way a family would, the church supplies financial and mental support both during times of joy and crisis. The family groups within the GEC and the ICGC conduct their meetings in members’ homes. Not only might it be seen as more convenient, especially if the members live a far way from the church, but it also enhances the feeling of belonging. This feeling of belonging and the knowledge that one and ones biological family is taken care of in times of despair can be legitimate reasons why certain people are drawn to the church, especially people of a low financial situation.

The different types of groups within the churches cater for their members’ mental and social needs. Not only are they a way of socializing with other people and sharing common interests, certain groups ensure that members do not leave the church. Examples of such groups can be found within the ICGC, namely the Singles Ministry and the Couples Club. The Singles Ministry encourages marriage within the church (which most often also results in children being born into the church) and the latter keep the couples from divorcing (which can result in members re-marrying into other churches).

Providing social welfare does not always have to include donating money. Giving an individual time can be just as rewarding. As seen with the PCG, a Reverend’s effort and connections can be enough to get a person into school. Another example is the house calls all of the churches conduct to those sick, old or invalid.

Apart from catering for their members, the three churches conduct different types of social welfare depending on what is in the interest of the pastor, the congregation and the location of the church. This is visible mainly within the PCG and the ICGC. Pastor Ahwireng of the PCG has a deep commitment for the youth receiving quality education and passing school and as this study has shown the PCG conducts the most social work within the educational field. The PCG thus looks into the future not only for the individual, but also for society (Ghana) as a whole. As the Reverend points out, drop-outs stand the risk of developing “idle hands” when they are not able to continue their studies at a higher level or find a job (either no job at all or one they are not satisfies with). This can lead, as seen in Odontia, to violence and low work morale, neither which are gainful for either the individual or society.
Kaneshie and Kotobabi differ from Teshie in one major respect; they are economically stable communities whilst large parts of Teshie is regarded as being poor. “Find the need” is what Pastor Xexemeku described as to which welfare questions the church should deal with. The ICGC involves itself in a lot of community work as Teshie has more public needs than the other two communities. The only things that might be seen as lacking in Kaneshie and Kotobabi, namely quality public schools (which is lacking all over Ghana), have been dealt with by the churches setting up their own educational facilities and providing extra tutorials.

The finance available is the main determent for how much social work the churches provide, as all three churches expressed the notion that they have the commitment needed. No figures can be given in this study as to how much money the churches spend on social welfare annually. It is possible, however, to get an idea of the churches’ financial situation by viewing how much social work they are conducting. The GEC seemingly has the least assets out of the three churches. Despite the fact that they are regarded as a large church, having approximately 1,800 more members than the ICGC and being the same size as the PCG, they conduct the least number of welfare projects out of the three and is the only church to collaborate financially with an NGO.

Membership fees are a way to ensure that the church receives money each month, regardless of how many members attend their Sunday service or are active in their groups. If all 850 adult members within the ICGC pay the standard membership fee of GHS 0.5 per month, it results in an annual income of GHS 5,100.

As shown in this study, for example with the PCG’s work in Odontia, the expectation on the church is sometimes higher then the work the church actually can accomplish. The church is not only well known for its successful welfare work, but also for the thought that God (and not simply the church people) are working for their wellbeing. There is a risk of disappointment and lack of faith in the church amongst the people with the high expectations. The congregation’s expectations of their church can also become too high, out of the same reason as above. As with the PCG, people expect a lot of welfare work to be provided by the church although the members are not willing to donate, what the church considers too be, enough money for the causes.

4.2 Connections between Churches, the Government and NGOs

All three denominations included in the study have long traditions within social work, which may be a factor why they provide social work even outside their own congregation. Although charismatic churches are claimed to focus more on spiritual questions than on welfare ones, Otabil’s somewhat non-charismatic preachings about social welfare questions permeates the congregation in Teshie. Although no financial figures can be given as to how much money the churches generate each year, it is interesting to note that as Pastor Xexemeku at the ICGC claims that the congregation responds well to his preaching about donating money to good causes, Rev. Ahwireng confesses that the PCG congregation does not donate enough money (even though they are considered to have the finances to do so). Hence Rev. Ahwireng confirms his own claim that the charismatic church has more generous members.

However, the strongest argument as to why the churches are involved in social welfare is that there is a need in the community. This study shows that certain basic social needs, such as high quality public schools, street lights (ensuring safety for the citizens at night), clean water etc, have at times been provided by the church and not the government. In a country like Ghana, with economic strain and poverty, even though the citizens are provided certain social privileges (like tuition free public schools and health insurance), the quality is sometimes so low that the citizens are forced to pay for many of their own social services. Instead of forcing on higher taxes, which could raise the government’s fund for social welfare, it is up to the citizens to defray their welfare needs. As Pastor Xexemeku points out, making contributions
to the church is a way of saving money for the day when it is needed, but it also implies the more economically privileged paying for the less economically privileged. This points towards that instead of entrusting the government for social support, the people rely on the church. Another reason for the low trust in the government in this regard can be the politically and economically unstable times the adults in Ghana grew up with. Although the situation is stable today, the mistrust in the government as a social welfare provider is rooted in the people. It is possible that their children will have a different view when they grow up, provided that the country continues to be politically stable and the economy continues to improve. A change of the government’s role as providers of social welfare will most likely also change the churches’ roles. However there will always be people with welfare needs (it would be naive to claim otherwise) which the government will not (for financial or resource purposes) or cannot reach out to and hence they become a matter for the churches and NGOs. And as long as urbanisation does not decline, the church’s role as a surrogate family will stay strong.

The teachings of Jesus and the gospels are given as an explanation as to why the churches provide social welfare and although it might legitimise their work, it is not their main reason as to why they conduct the welfare work they do. This raises the question whether or not the church itself has taken on this role as a provider of welfare, as to have been given it? Teshie and Odontia are two examples of communities where the church, and not the government, has stepped in and provided basic needs for the people. The situation can be interpreted as the government either lacking the finance to step in themselves, or that they are using the church’s tradition within social welfare in order to avoid getting involved. But an important question is: is the latter a negative thing? Although the church is not, as Rev. Ahwireng pointed out, a charity organisation it is a part of the community, as Pastor Xexemeku pointed out. Since the government, in its current financial situation, does not have the resources to supply all basic needs for all its citizens, is it not in the interest of the public (including churches) to help its government to ensure the wellbeing of the people in their own community?! Or has the relationship between the government and the other providers of social welfare come to the point where the government relies so much on the other providers that their step back is too large? This is, however, a discussion for a thesis of its own.

Apart from filling needs where there is a total lack of it, for example street lights in Teshie or a school in Odontia, the church also provides welfare where the quality provided by the government is not considered being high enough by the citizens. An example of this is the public schools in Ghana. They are considered being of such low quality that the PCG not only runs its own school, it also offers extra schooling for pupils attending public schools, in order for them to pass secondary school. Another example is the water and sanitation in Teshie. Although it is present, it does not meet up to the standards of what the ICGC sees as agreeable. In both cases the church does not step in and become the sole provider of the service, but instead improve what the government is considered doing a faulty job.

Since NGOs rely on donations it could be believed that it is important for them to keep a face of success, in order for people to know that their donated money is helping the cause and hence feel the urge to keep supporting the NGO. A reason why NGOs “pick and choose” causes and why some causes are not covered by NGOs (for example crime in Ghana) can be because the causes are difficult to fund and / or difficult to show quick enough success results to keep donors pleased. This can be linked to the fact that some NGOs receive donations from western countries. As these people do not live in Ghana, it might be difficult “selling” them certain appeals which they cannot experience. Crime has no picture to awaken compassion, the same way as for example starving children more often do. The NGO Compassion, which the GEC in Kotobabi collaborate with, post cute pictures of the children up for sponsoring on
their website for the potential American donors to choose from. It can also be assumed that this is a more effective way of receiving funding, rather than showing pictures of people getting burgled, murdered and raped.

5 Conclusion
With a population of approximately 69 per cent Christians and religion being highly expressed and vibrant, Ghana (situated in West Africa) is an ideal country to conduct research on Christianity in. The study was conducted during a six week period in the country’s capital Accra. It investigates the social welfare provided by three different congregations, namely the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Kaneshie, the Global Evangelical Church in Kotobabi and the International Central Gospel Church, Hosanna Temple, in Teshie. The research questions include what kind of social welfare the churches provide, how the different projects are financed and why the churches should be involved in social welfare.

The study used the historical hermeneutic theory of science and approached the hermeneutic circle. The primary sources were representatives from the different congregations and Dr. Ayidiya at the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana (in order to get information about the present social welfare in Ghana). Interviews and observation through participation were used as methods.

Christianity was introduced in Ghana by Catholic friars sailing with Portuguese merchants in the late fifteenth century. However, it was not until the mid seventeenth century, when a larger group of missionaries started to preach their beliefs, that Christianity started spreading amongst the indigenous people. Both the PCG and the GEC have their roots in European missionaries. The ICGC, which is the youngest out of the three churches in this study, originates from the teachings of a native Ghanaian pastor. They all have long traditions within social work.

All three congregations have well thought through and well run welfare programmes. Their primary focus is to meet the needs of their members, mainly through mental and economical support in the different stages of life (such as birth, marriage and death) and when unexpected events occur (such as sickness and unemployment). All three congregations have different types of groups within the church, ranging from being composed of people residing within the same area, to having common interests. These groups provide their own welfare, mainly for their group members, but to some extent they also provide services favourable to the whole church. Apart from the focus put on the individual member, the churches run different kinds of welfare projects. The main differences between the focus of the projects are the following:

- The PCG is the only church out of the three to run their own school and also to provide social aid to another community then their own (through providing social and financial aid to the village of Odontia).
- The GEC is the only church to have collaborations with an NGO. Together with an American charity organisation, they provide education for poor children in their area.
- The ICGC, which is situated in the most economically deprived area out of the three congregations, conducts the most community work on a local level.

All three congregations are financed entirely through donations from their members, mainly through offerings and tithe. The GEC and the ICGC also collect membership fees.

The PCG and the ICGC both consider that the church should be involved in social welfare in order to make the gospel real, i.e. that Christianity should be action and more than simply prayers. They both make references to Matthew 25:21 in the Bible, interpreting it as Jesus encouraging people to provide social welfare for those in need of it. The GEC considers that

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their members (as human beings) have certain needs and feels that the church is responsible to cater for those needs.

In this study, the following conclusions have been made:

- The church has taken over the social welfare originally provided by the family group, giving both mental and financial aid when a member is in need of it. The way that the GEC and the ICGC have cells and covenant families, which meet in members’ homes, enhance the feeling of belonging. This can be a reason why certain people, especially those with a low financial situation, are drawn to the church. It can also be a comfort for them to know that the church takes care of both themselves and their biological family in times of despair.

- The different groups found within the churches cater for the members’ mental and social needs. They are a way for the members to socialize, share common interests and to some extend also ensure that members stay within the church (the ICGC’s Singles Ministry and Couples Club being two good examples).

- Social welfare does not merely include the churches donating money. Time and the use of connections can be just as helpful when provided to enhance a member’s quality of life. This can include making house or hospital calls to those not being able to attend church or to help a member get into school.

- The area the church resides in and their financial situation and personal concerns determine the kind of, and how much, social welfare the church provides. As large parts of the population in Teshie live in poverty, the ICGC conducts a lot of work within the community. The PCG and the GEC in Kaneshie and Kotobabi do not face the same problem and hence they put their focus on needs seen as less basic. The PCG exemplifies the personal concerns which are present when providing social welfare. The congregation has several welfare programmes devoted to education, as it is a concern of the PCG’s Reverend that young Ghanaians are developing “idle hands” when not being able to either study or get a job because they lack education.

- The expectations on what kind of social work the church can provide (and in what scale) is sometimes higher than what the church is able to live up to. The church then risks receiving less donations, disappointment and lack of faith.

- The churches’ main reason for being involved in social work is that there is a need in the community. This need has been created by the government not always having taken its social responsibility. Sometimes the services provided by the government are of such low quality that the citizen has to find other, often more expensive, options. Being a member of a church and making contributions hence becomes a way of saving money for when it is one day needed. The church is thus entrusted for welfare support in a higher extend than the government is.

- The teachings of Jesus and the gospels legitimize the churches’ social work, although it is not the main reason as to why they provide it. This raises the question if the role as social provider has been handed to or taken by the church? The government may use the church in order to avoid getting involved themselves in certain projects, for either ignorance or simply lacking resources.

- Sometimes the church steps in and improves what the government is already providing, for example education and sanitation, since they consider it to be of bad quality.

- It is important for NGOs, as they are funded by donations (sometimes from western countries), to show successful results and to “sell” the cause to their donors. This is why they “pick and choose” their causes and why certain causes are overlooked.
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**Secondary informants** (interviews conducted by Linda Lidzén), anonymous interviewees

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