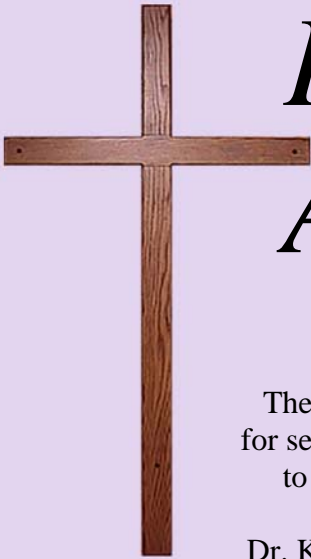


Follow JESUS



*Prevent
AIDS*

The biblical basis
for sexual abstinence
to avoid AIDS

Dr. K. Syam Kumar
Rev. Frank Kodjo Famiyeh, STM

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Preface

In the two decades since its outbreak, HIV has infected more than 60 million people in the world, and AIDS has caused the deaths of more than 20 million⁻³⁻. Many families have shattered lives are left destitute by this disease. In addition, more than 14 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS. AIDS is reversing societal development by reducing the most productive years of men and women and eroding social and family structures.

Despite being an international epidemic, AIDS has hit Africa the hardest. Seventy percent of the global HIV and AIDS caseload is borne by Africa. Of the 3 million people who are expected to die from AIDS in the coming year, 80 percent will be from Africa. According to statistics recently produced by the World Health Organization, in some parts of Africa, 25 percent of the population is infected by HIV mostly due to uncontrollable sexual practices. Alarming as they sound, those figures are underestimates because many people with AIDS deny the disease for fear of being stigmatized. People try to avoid the embarrassment of linking their HIV infection to living an immoral life. It is presumed if you get AIDS, you have done something wrong.

According to the Anglican Public Health Secretariat in Ghana, every day 250 or more people get infected with HIV...

- 50% of all new infections occur in 15 to 24-year-olds.
- The highest infection level, are in age group 20 to 24 yrs.
- The peak age for AIDS cases, are females 25 to 35 years and males 30 to 39 years.

- Among Commercial Sex Workers in Accra and Kumasi, about 76-82 out of every 100 of them are HIV infected.
- In the year 2002, AIDS accounted for 12% of deaths in Ghana and 140,000 children were made orphans as a result of AIDS.

The primary method of contracting the disease is through sexual intercourse with an infected person. The Bible, though, provides specific guidelines on sexual behavior that can help eliminate the spread of the disease. For example, one of the Ten Commandments given by the Lord to Moses is:

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

The word "**adultery**" means "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married man (or married woman) and someone other than his wife (or her husband)." Related to adultery is the subject of **fornication**, which is "sexual intercourse between unmarried people." The Bible gives us explicit instructions about this act also.

"Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:13,18).

Whenever sexual intercourse is committed outside of marriage, a person places himself or herself at risk for developing AIDS from an infected person.

Introduction

Dear Believers in Christ:

God's Peace to all of you. Greetings in the name of Jesus! The most deadly disease problem of the world today is HIV/AIDS. Millions of people in the world are infected by this disease and are suffering. HIV/AIDS is like a curse to the world, and scientists are desperately conducting research to find a cure.

The need for this booklet was recognized by the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God inspired the FMB to have this material made available wherever in the world, they could benefit from it.

Many have faced severe illness and death as a result of yielding to the temptation of illicit sexual relations thus exposing them to contract the disease. The primary purpose of this book is to give an understanding of HIV/AIDS and to provide instructions from the Bible so that people, especially young people, may not die and their children will not become orphans. This book provides a brief explanation for the cause of HIV/AIDS and its impact on the human body and society. Also, this book instructs readers to share the love of Jesus with those who are suffering with HIV/AIDS, and to be compassionate to the orphans resulting from this disease.

The readers of this book are encouraged to protect themselves from this dreaded disease by following Jesus, our Lord. He can help to avoid getting HIV/AIDS and gives power over the temptations of the world and sex. We pray that God will bless you all.

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1. The Plague of AIDS

Many people in the world, Christians and non-Christians alike, suffer from many different kinds of diseases. The Word of God says, “*the wages of sin is death...*” (Romans 6:23). As sin is increasing, new diseases become evident in the human race.’

Even though mankind is advancing in the areas of medicine and medical technology, new diseases are spreading and cause much suffering. In Old Testament times, leprosy was a much hated disease. Back then, and even today, the leper had to be isolated and live away from other people and normal everyday life. Eventually, though, medicines were developed for leprosy and now this disease is more under control. Other diseases have arisen, such as syphilis, cholera, small pox, measles, chicken pox, and tuberculosis. Medicines have been developed to control these diseases also. But this is not true for AIDS, which still remains incurable. What is the biggest reason for the AIDS epidemic in the world? Why are so many people dying from this terrible disease? The main reason is that the world has ignored the instructions given by God in the Bible, and is now suffering the consequences of their sin.

The Consequences of Sin

The Bible gives us many examples of the consequences of sin and sinful living. One story in the Old Testament tells us about the great flood that covered the earth because of the wickedness of the world. Noah and his family were righteous, and God selected them to build an ark that would protect them from the flood that was to come. When Noah was building the ark, the people laughed. They did not want to know God and did not believe in Him, even though God wanted to save them from the flood. As a result, they all perished in the great flood, except for Noah and his family.

“And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth...” (Genesis 7:17,23)

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:17,23).

Some though have obeyed God and have been blessed. During the time of Daniel the prophet, three young Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were ordered to drink wine and eat the royal food at the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. But they did not do so. They did not accept the pleasures of the world and chose to serve God instead. They took only water and ate vegetarian meals. But a miracle happened. When examined after a time, they were found to be in much better health than those who received the wine and the king's food. These three men of God were tempted by the things of this world, but they overcame the temptation. The Bible promises blessings for those who overcome temptation.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:12, 14).

In the New Testament we can read the story of the woman caught in adultery. The common practice was that the woman should be stoned to death. She was brought to Jesus by the religious men of that time. Jesus said, *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7)*. The men slowly left because in their own hearts they knew they were guilty of the same sin. *"Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28)*. Not only is adultery a violation of God's intent for the family, through adultery many diseases, like *HIV/AIDS*, spread from one person to another. We are all sinners and we sin in different ways.

We have to remember the words that Jesus spoke to this adulterous woman. *"Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" (John 8:10,11)*.

"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10,11). Certainly there can be forgiveness for the one who has committed adultery since Jesus forgave this woman.

Drugs and Alcohol

Today, many people are addicted to drugs and alcohol, which can lead to promiscuity. Many diseases, such as *HIV/AIDS* and other STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) can be contracted because of it. Also, if we consume alcohol for many years, our livers can be damaged, As the Bible says, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:7,8).*

God commanded people to avoid excessive alcohol for their own good. Proverbs 20: 1 says, *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."* An alcoholic person may commit many crimes. For example, a man under the influence of alcohol loses the capacity to judge what is good or bad, especially in the area of sex. He may attempt rape, or perhaps even murder. The person who continually seeks alcohol will become poor and neglect his family. This is also true of those who take drugs and become addicted. *"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Proverbs 21:17).*

Smoking

Even though smoking is not clearly related to *HIV/AIDS*, the Word of God indirectly tells us not to smoke because it is harmful to the body. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).* If we smoke we may get lung cancer and may become more prone to develop tuberculosis and other lung diseases. This is not honoring to our bodies that house the Holy Spirit.

2. Definitions

What Is HIV?

HIV is the name of the virus which causes AIDS. We can rightly call it the mother of AIDS. Its full name is Human Immune-deficiency Virus.

What Is AIDS?

AIDS means Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It occurs when a person loses the God-given natural resistance of the body the resistance a person usually has after he or she is born. Resistance to diseases is very important for any person to survive against bacteria and virus-causing diseases. The AIDS is caused by a type of retrovirus called HIV (Human Immune-deficiency Virus). This was named as the causative virus for AIDS in May 1986.

How Does HIV Cause AIDS?

The size of the virus is $1/10,000$ of a millimeter. This virus destroys a certain kind of blood cell (T4 helper cells and T lymphocytes) in the human body, which is crucial to the normal function of the human immune system. When this happens the body loses its natural resistance to infections i.e. its capacity to do battle with, and prevent infections. This condition leads to AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. When the body defense system is destroyed by the HIV virus the body is no longer capable of fighting infections or sicknesses. The resultant body weakness or helplessness is the AIDS condition which invariably leads to death. The virus is passed from one person to another through sexual and blood-to-blood contact. This happens when a person's infected semen, vaginal fluids, or blood come in contact with an uninfected person's broken skin or mucous membranes. A mucous membrane is wet, thin tissue found in certain openings to the human body. These can include the mouth, eyes, nose, vagina, rectum, and opening of the penis.

The virus will cross the blood brain barrier and destroy brain tissue. This virus will be genetically changing or mutating from time to time. Because of this change (mutation), a new virus is continually forming and multiplying in nature. After the virus enters the body, the body develops antibodies against the HIV. If a blood test reveals the presence of such antibodies, it means a person is HIV infected. The most common ways that HIV is transmitted from one person to another is, 1) by having sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) with an HIV-infected person, 2) by sharing needles or injection equipment with an injection drug user who is infected with HIV, or 3) from HIV-infected women to their babies before (or during birth, or through breast-feeding after birth. HIV can also be innocently received from infected blood during transfusions.

There has not been any scientific proof that mosquitoes can pass on the HIV virus from one person to another.

Impact of AIDS

HIV/AIDS can lead to nervous weakness, neuropathy, and unusual cancers. Once infected with HIV, a person lives with it the rest of his life. This disease affects all people alike -infants, growing children, pregnant women, etc. It impacts the life span of men and women, and thus can impact economic growth in countries. This disease spreads easily and more rapidly in people who already have another type of STD.

It does not spread as a result of infected insects and mosquitoes. Nor does it spread through normal social relationships, living in the same house with an *HIV/AIDS* patient, from food, or water. Health workers that care for people with this disease do not normally get infected from casual contact with the patient.. The disease is found in both males and females, and affects homosexuals, heterosexuals, and prostitutes alike.

After the HIV virus enters the body, antibodies will be produced. The incubation period from HIV-positive to AIDS ranges from a few months to six or more years. The virus can stay in the human

body without any disease occurring during the incubation period. 10% to 30% of HIV-positive people will become AIDS patients in a few years. 25% to 35% of HIV-positive people will get AIDS related complex diseases. In the infected people, antibodies will be produced against this virus. Some people with the HIV virus, who experience no change or disease, will act as carriers and spread the disease to others.

There may not be any change in health for five years. After a person is infected with the virus, he or she can infect or spread it to others after the time of exposure. From the time of exposure to the virus, it will take two to twelve weeks to produce antibodies in the blood. In some people, it will take more time. AIDS is the last stage for HIV-positive people. Many diseases will be contracted by the person in the AIDS stage.

Common Diseases Resulting From AIDS

The common diseases that result from the loss of immunity because of AIDS are, 1) tuberculosis, 2) serious fungal infections, 3) oral diseases, 4) candidiasis, 5) meningitis, and 6) pneumonia. There is a very close relationship between AIDS and tuberculosis. Because of low immunity, the AIDS person will be easily infected by tuberculosis. A person infected with AIDS will have prolonged diarrhea and loss of weight. AIDS patients will often lose their memory because of weakness in the nervous system and brain.

Characteristic Signs of AIDS There are three major characteristic signs of AIDS:

1. Losing 10% or more of one's body weight
2. Diarrhea for more than one month
3. Fever for more than one month

The secondary signs of AIDS are:

1. Suffering with a cough for more than one month
2. Dermatitis or rash (itching) of the skin
3. Herpes zoster
4. Oral candidiasis
5. Herpes simplex virus disease.

The antibodies formed by the virus can be easily detected through laboratory diagnosis using the *ELISA Blood test*, the *Western Blot Test*, and also by isolating the virus.

3. The Solution to AIDS

Sexual Abstinence

We can prevent AIDS by not having illicit sexual contacts. with the opposite sex (avoiding adultery, fornication, and homosexual relationships). As men, we need to respect the image of a woman and not destroy it. We should pray when we face all temptations. Young people need to wait for marriage before they have sexual relations. This should be clear as we see all the negative consequences of having sex before marriage.

Married couples are also encouraged to remain faithful to their spouses. If we find it difficult to abstain from pre-marital sex or indulgence in adultery we can find help in Jesus Christ. *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me..."*

The heavy load that Jesus refers to includes our uncontrollable sex drives from which He can give us rest. It does us no good to be associated with persons who would entice us into the evil of fornication and adultery. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers..."*

When we follow Jesus, His Spirit empowers us to learn from Him so we do not indulge in drugs, fornication and adultery, all of which could lead us into being infected with HIV.

Here are the top 10 reasons to avoid sex before marriage:

- 1) You hurt your relationship with God
- 2) You can get pregnant
- 3) You will receive heartache
- 4) You could contract a life-long STD
- 5) You may destroy any future marriage relationship
- 6) You lose your self-respect
- 7) You destroy your reputation
- 8) You become distracted from your life goals
- 9) You feel cheap and used
- 10) You cheat yourself out of friendship with the opposite sex

Teenagers often choose to have sex for the following reasons:

- 1) a desire to feel loved
- 2) the influence of drugs and alcohol
- 3) the media
- 4) by friendly pressure
- 5) by peers
- 6) self (hormones)

Sexual Abstinence Is An Act of Love

Sexual abstinence can be defined as waiting to have the best, safest, most ultimate sex until marriage. Postponing sexual activity until marriage will make you risk-free and help you find true love and closeness. **ABSTINENCE IS AN ACT OF LOVE.** It helps the other person by protecting every part of their being, including their body, mind, and emotions.

Sex is like fire, in that it can be a very good thing if used in the right context. Fire gives us warmth and enables us to cook our food. But what happens if fire is out of control? It can burn everything. In the same way, sex used in the wrong context can have devastating results. This is why sex must only be done within marriage.

ABSTAIN! WAIT! Keep your sexuality to yourself! Preserve it! The decision you make today will have lasting consequences. *"Now concerning the things where of ye wrote unto me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I (abstinent). But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 7:1-3, 9).*

Use of Condoms

Using condoms does not give 100% safety and security. Condoms are better than nothing, but it is misleading to think that condoms make sex safe. Even if they are used consistently and correctly, they can slip or break. Plus, condoms do not cover everything. They reduce, **BUT DO NOT ELIMINATE THE RISK OF HIV TRANSMISSION AND OTHER STDs.**

4. Victory Through God's Grace

When God created Adam and Eve, He created both of them not only for their bodily needs or desires, but He also made both of them to meet each other's spiritual needs. God has given this holy sexual relationship between husband and wife through the holy bond of marriage. This sexual relationship was not given for bodily pleasure but to unite both bodies as husband and wife, and to reproduce, multiply, and fill the entire earth.

Do not forget Satan. He is like a roaring lion who wants to devour you. *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8)*. Satan tells us to have sexual contact with everyone and to enjoy the pleasures of worldly sex. The evil one says nothing bad will happen if you have sexual relations with many people

Do not forget that Satan is watching you. He is tempting you so he can kill you. He wants to steal your soul and destroy you. The sexual relationship other than the marriage relationship is a weapon that Satan uses to destroy a man. It is only through marriage that a man can live without any harm or worry. It is through marriage that people can live their lives in God joyfully. *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge "* (Hebrews 13:4).

5. Compassion

Toward the Victims of AIDS

The HIV virus also can infect innocent people who receive infected blood and blood by-products through transfusions for a medical condition. In addition people can accidentally acquire the virus by using razors and blades used by infected persons for shaving, or even by using the toothbrush of an infected person. For these people we should have a special compassion as they have contracted the disease through no fault of their own.

However, we need to show compassion to all who have contracted the disease. When we do not show compassion to victims of AIDS, for example, by ostracizing them they feel hopeless, unwanted, and unloved. Their emotions could very easily lead to deeper stress and earlier death. Ostracized AIDS patients, under the circumstances, might be tempted to vent their spleen on society by spreading the disease without a prick of their conscience.

The lippling effect of their 'vengeance' could be very disastrous to society. Therefore we ought to remember to reach out to AIDS patients and show them unqualified love because our Father in Heaven loves them even as He loves us! We should especially not neglect the children who have become orphans through this disease but provide for their care and welfare. Taking care of those who are sick, hungry, and lonely is a sign that we truly know God and that we will inherit His Kingdom. As Jesus said:

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

6. Conclusion

The instructions and warnings contained in the Bible, and the AIDS statistics compiled by different countries, show that illicit sex contributes much towards the spread of HIV/AIDS. But God is in control. He offers the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the love of the sins of this world through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood and gave His life as a ransom for our sins. The problem, however, is that mankind is not willing to accept this free gift, but continues to disregard the instructions that God has given us, and continues to seek after the pleasures of this world.

It is our prayer that the readers of this book will find God's Peace through repentance and faith in Christ where we can become new creatures in Christ. Our former life of sexual sins can then be washed away in His precious atoning blood.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

7. Testimonies of Hope

Bible provides examples of the healing power of Jesus. For example, he healed the deaf, the blind, the lame, people under the influence of evil spirits, and other maladies. We, at the Mission Hospital in India have seen examples of His healing power. We don't understand these acts of mercy, but accept them as the will of God for the people affected. The following are two examples of His merciful healing as it relates to HIV/AIDS:

Testimony 1: One day a man who was diagnosed as HIVpositive visited our Mission Hospital in India. He had two wives when he was informed, after blood tests, that he was HIV-positive. He was very sad and was ready to pay whatever it cost to be cured. He was a Hindu and a religious man who worshiped Hindu gods and idols. When he heard that he was inflicted with HIV, he became very depressed. He knew that eventually he would die and knew that this disease was incurable, even if he worshiped his Hindu gods and idols. His life was full of darkness.

One day while walking by one of our Christian churches, he happened to hear the Word of God. This is what he heard: *"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, ann yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"* (1 Peter 4:1). Those words from the church gave this man comfort. As he was weeping by the church, a Christian servant came out and asked him why he was crying. The man said that he was HIV-positive and knew there was no medical cure for him.

But the servant of God told him that nothing was impossible with Jesus. He shared with the man how Christ healed many who were blind, crippled, deaf and dumb, and demon-possessed. In a few days, the Hindu man started attending church and repented. His life radically changed as he came to the "light" and found forgiveness in Jesus. As the Bible says: *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). After he became a Christian, he was very happy and full of peace. Because of Christ's healing power, he again was healthy.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

This man realized that this Jesus who loved him and accepted him could also heal any disease, even HIV. When his relatives knew that he had HIV, they isolated him and kept him away from them. God's servant, though, took him and comforted him with the love of Christ. This man realized that HIV could not do anything to him any longer, because he knew that Christ would give him a place in eternity even after his death, not because of his disease, but because of Christ's great love and grace. The man had been rejected by his relatives; his Hindu gods and idols did nothing for him, but God's servant loved him, comforted him, and guided him into the Lord's grace.

Testimony 2:

A Hindu man who had sex with many women came to our Mission Hospital. This man had previously been to a Medical College Hospital for hemorrhoid surgery. When blood tests taken at the hospital revealed that he was HIV-positive, they sent him away without doing the surgery.

In despair and without any hope, this man decided that he would hang himself. However, a Christian woman guided him to our Mission Hospital. When he came to the hospital, the doctor on our staff felt pity for this man after looking into his blood test reports. The doctor, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, decided to do more blood tests, which is usually not done after another hospital has confirmed that a person is HIV-positive.

After three tests, the results showed that the man was HIV-negative. The staff expressed their thanks and gratitude for the wonderful healing of our God and praised His name. Jesus healed this man from HIV. By the grace of God he was converted and his children now did not have to become orphans through his suicide. Many came to know Jesus by this and were also converted, and the man's entire family became Christians. The Lord Jesus can deliver and heal from any kind of incurable disease or pain, according to His will. He has power over both body and the spirit. Psalm 103:3 says, He is the one *"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healed all thy diseases."*

8. Remember ...

And now beloved in the Lord, remember that:

GOD NEEDS YOU ALIVE;

GHANA NEEDS YOU ALIVE;

YOUR FAMILY NEEDS YOU ALIVE;

THEREFORE:

LOVE LIFE, FOLLOW JESUS, STOP AIDS!

Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, our only source of health and healing, who alone can bring calmness and peace; Grant us, your children, a consciousness of your presence and a strong confidence in you. In our pain, our weariness, and our anxiety, surround us with your care, protect us by your loving might, and permit us once more to enjoy health, strength and peace; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

RECOMMENDATION

Contact any of our pastors in the Greater Accra Area for counseling and help:

Rev. Emmanuel M. Baisie, Adenta Congregation of ALCG

Rev. Frank Botchway, Teshie Congregation

Rev. Samuel Ayim, Kokomlemle Congregation

Rev. Joseph Asare, Gbawe Congregation

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