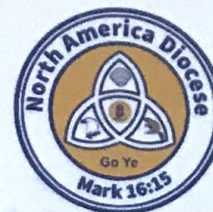


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TO: All the People Called Methodists of the Methodist Church, Ghana in North America

On the first Sunday of the 2022-23 Church Year

October 2nd 2022

Dearly beloved sisters and brothers,

I greet you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ on this first Sunday of our church year. These greetings come as we begin our celebration of full diocesan status within the Methodist Church, Ghana. As of October 1st by the decision of the Conference of the Methodist Church, Ghana held in Winneba August 16th - 21st, 2022, we are now the **North America Diocese (NAmd)**. Thanks be to God and thanks to all past and present ministers, lay leaders, teachers, evangelists, administrators, stewards and organizers who have served in the Diocese.

As we embark on this journey as the first Diocese of our church outside the geographical boundaries of Ghana, I would like to draw our attention to and urge action on THREE areas of human endeavor that St Paul used as analogies of the Christian life in 2 Timothy 2: 4 - 6.

“No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (v.4) An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules (v. 5) It is the hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.” (v.6)

First then, the military analogy. Brethren, please remember you and I are soldiers of Christ. Our esteemed father in the faith, Charles Wesley, urges us in the following words

“Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on.

Strong in the strength which God supplies, through His eternal Son:

Strong in the Lord of Hosts, and in His mighty power.

Who in the strength of Jesus trusts, is more than conqueror” (MHB 484:

v.1)

Discipleship: living the transformed life in Jesus Christ - Romans 12: 1-2

Remember we are engaged in a spiritual battle for which we must put on the whole armor of Christ (Eph 6). We are not fighting any human beings, but rather against spiritual forces of wickedness. Always remember you are a soldier in the army of the Lord. Don't let your guard down. Do not turn your back. Face the foes. You are on the victory's side.

Every soldier is obedient to their captain or commander. In like manner we shall expect that all Methodists as soldiers will comply with the directives and decisions that come from our Conference, our synod. Let us all ensure that we live up to the high calling of God through obedience to Christ and the church. Insubordination will not be tolerated in the North America Diocese.

Second, the athletic analogy. You are an athlete for Christ. Be sure to know the kind of event you are competing in and prepare to compete. Athletes have to obey the rules. Ghana's 4x100 track team in the recently ended Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022, were disqualified because the Ghanaian officials did not comply with the rules. The runners did not even get to compete.

Our church is guided by the Word of God and our Constitution. A New Constitution was passed at the Winneba Conference. It is going through the final editing processes and will soon be published. Copies will be made available to every Methodist member. Be sure to secure your copy as soon as it is available. It will be our guide as a new diocese. We shall endeavor to apply the principles and stipulations of the Constitution and directives of our Conference in our faith and practice here with thoughtful attention to our context here in North America.

DISCIPLINE

Do note that the characteristic mark of both soldiers and athletes is one thing: **DISCIPLINE**. Methodists, like all true Disciples of Jesus Christ are disciplined people. Brethren, permit me to be very plain: **NO MORE INDISCIPLINE AMONG US**. Let us be serious-minded, disciplined and dedicated to the service of Christ and His church. In the North America Diocese, we shall be good stewards of our time. We shall perform our duties in a timely manner, and on time. Our services will begin on time and end on time. They will be memorable for their crispness and time consciousness. People will want to join us because they will see that we are serious-minded, disciplined people who do what they say and say what they do. We are reviewing our annual calendar and will be eliminating the rampant over-programming that means that many of us are attending meetings at diocesan, circuit, societal or organizational level every day of the week without any sabbaths at all. Such program overload means that Methodists are forever

attending church meetings and have no time to actually be 'living the transformed life of Jesus Christ' at home, in school, or at work. During the period from October till December this year the Diocesan Executive will be undertaking careful planning of our diocesan calendar for the year 2023 to eliminate clashes and overload. Superintendent ministers, circuit officers, and organizational leaders are urged to ensure that we all comply with the established programs and no longer at the last-minute plan additional events that place huge burdens upon members.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We shall be expecting and promoting responsibility, transparency, and accountability in all our financial affairs. To this end we have commissioned and urged all our Circuit auditors to diligently audit all our circuit accounts, society auditors to do the same with society accounts, and our diocesan auditor to do so for diocesan funds. All circuit and society stewards, please take note. We shall be rigorously enforcing financial accountability. The payment of ministerial stipends has been centralized. Please be sure to pay in your portion of the Wage Bill regularly and promptly so that Ministers stipends are duly paid out of the central funds. We expect full cooperation with the percentage revenue mobilization system that we have adopted at the levels agreed at synod. Prompt remittance of the agreed amounts will enable us to fulfill our strategic goals of revival and growth throughout the diocese.

Thirdly, the agricultural analogy. We are likened to farmers. Farmers - both men and women - are hardworking people. They rise early, walk miles and then work diligently. Their hard work produces the fruits that give us the nourishment we need to live. We must sow seeds, nurture growth, and reap harvests of souls for the Kingdom.

Let us be diligent in planting churches, nurturing disciples, and growing communities of believers in every circuit.

Conference has directed that we ensure that 30% of our committees and offices at all levels - society, circuit and diocese be occupied by people under 35 years of age. Let us comply and encourage the young men and women among us to exercise leadership roles among us.

Our 2021 statistical returns indicate that in our Diocese 57% of our total Christian Community are female. This fact must be reflected in the leadership profile of our church. There is work for us to do.

I therefore urge us all, in the words of the Israelites in response to Nehemiah's call, "Let us rise up and build" (Neh 2: 18). In like manner, the message from Isaiah to us at this

time is, "Arise! Shine! For your light has come. And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. (Is. 60:1)

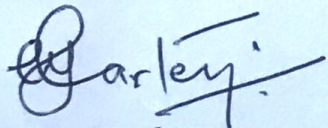
Building the church requires work. We must work. We must work hard. No one is going to do it for us. We must gird up our own loins and work for the Kingdom of God. We must sow the seed of the Word of God and spread the good news of our Lord. We must strengthen the weak knees and empower the small societies in all our circuits.

Dearly beloved, let us arise and fight the good fight of faith as gallant soldiers of Christ. Let us shine as athletes running the race of life for our Lord and Savior with our eyes on the prize of eternal benediction.

Let us as farmers sow the seeds and reap the harvest of souls for our God.

Thanks be to God for the North America Diocese. Let us arise, build, and shine for the glory of the Lord is truly risen upon us.

Yours in His Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Lartey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Y. Lartey, PhD
Bishop, North America Diocese.