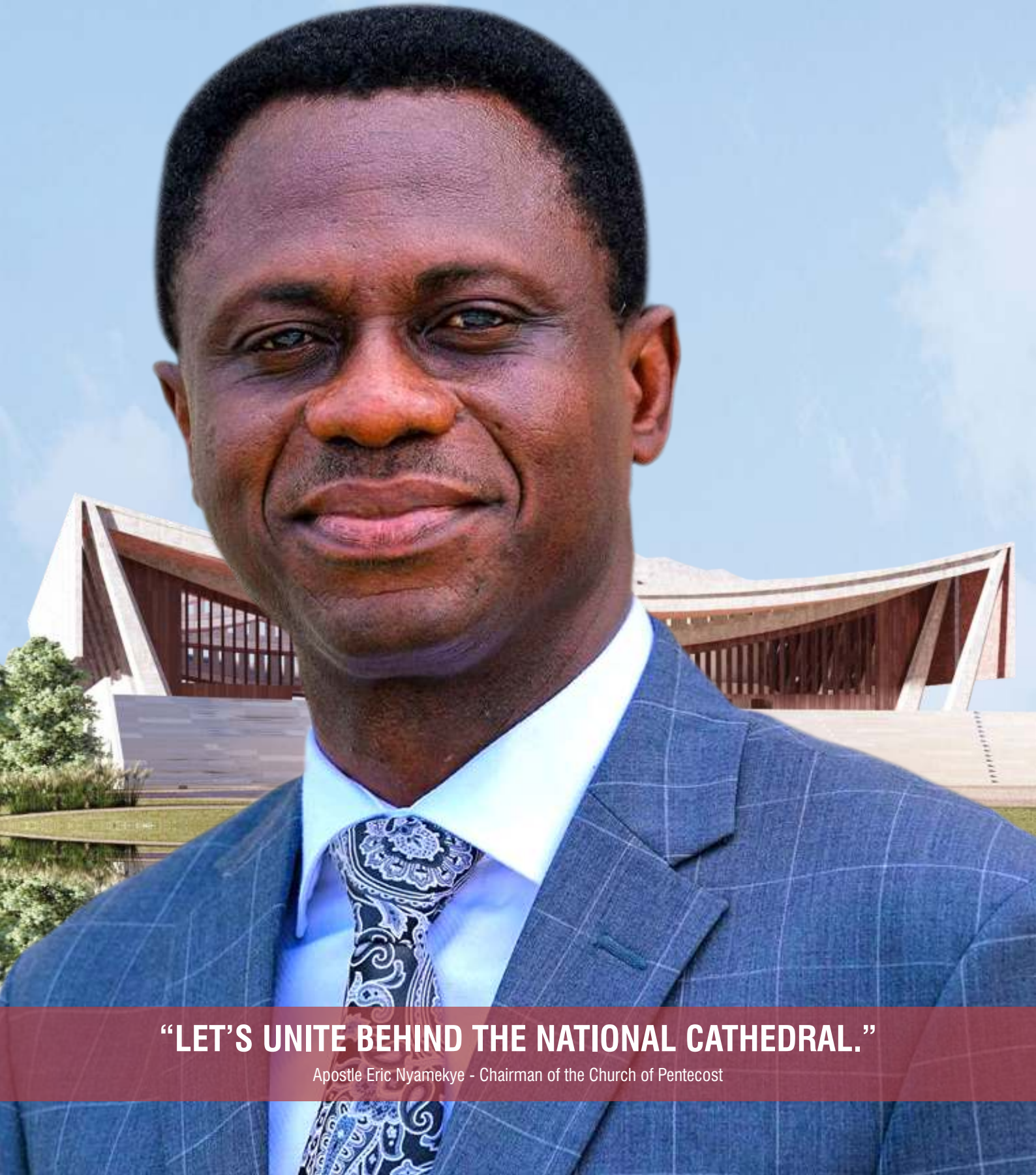


NATIONAL CATHEDRAL UPDATE



Number 2 - January - March, 2020 - News from the Secretariat of the National Cathedral of Ghana



“LET’S UNITE BEHIND THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL.”

Apostle Eric Nyamekye - Chairman of the Church of Pentecost

THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL AT A GLANCE

The National Cathedral, designed by the leading Ghanaian-British Architect Sir David Adjaye OBE, is both an iconic infrastructure and a convening platform. As an infrastructure, the Cathedral is an iconic landmark that addresses a “missing link in the nation's architecture” by providing a “great church for national purposes” where Ghanaians of all denominations gather to worship, reflect, celebrate, and mourn. It will serve as a venue for formal state occasions of a religious nature such as Presidential Inaugural services, State Funerals, National Thanksgiving services, amongst others. It includes a 5000-seater auditorium, expandable to 15000; baptistery; chapels; conference center; and Africa's first Bible Museum and Documentation Center. As a convening platform, the National Cathedral will be a unifying monument around which to elevate shared conversations on the role of the Christian faith and values in nation building.

The National Cathedral is the vision of the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and involves close partnership between the State and the Ghanaian Christian community, for its development. This partnership between the state and the Christian community builds on the rich history of the Church's involvement in National development, and reflects the social partnership envisaged to foster participatory development of the country as a collective goal.

Administratively the Chief of Staff is the coordinator of the project at the Presidency. A Board of Trustees made up of leading clergy across the major church denominations, is established to mobilize support, including fundraising, for the Cathedral; and oversee its management once completed. The day-to-day strategic and operational coordination of the work on the National Cathedral is under a Secretariat, headed by an Executive Director with administrative, mobilization and thought leadership responsibilities. The Secretariat also supervises the Project Management Office (PMO) of the Cathedral project, coordinates the Cathedral's national and international institutional relations, and represents the Cathedral to the public.

THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL UPDATE

The *National Cathedral Update* is a quarterly Newsletter from the Secretariat of the National Cathedral of Ghana, and forms part of the Public Education functions of the Secretariat.

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EDITORIAL: *EN ROUTE TO THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL!*

Paul Opoku Mensah, PHD (Editor)



The January 30, 2020 announcement by the President, at the Church of Pentecost auditorium in Bantama, that the construction of the National Cathedral will formally begin on March 5, 2020 - the eve of our 63rd Independence – brings to a close three years of preparatory work! For those of us who have had the privilege of working on the National Cathedral on a daily basis, this was perhaps the most significant announcement on the National Cathedral so far, and brought with it a sigh of relief. The preparatory work of the past three years has focused on key foundational issues of Design; Land Acquisition; Legal and Administrative Framework; National and International Mobilization; Operations; and Fundraising.

With the announcement of the date for the groundbreaking came a quick stock taking of what the preparatory work has achieved. In reflecting on the preparatory work, I was drawn particularly to the activities related to the Design of the Cathedral. This is because while the National Cathedral is more than a building, all the other activities derive their legitimacy and relevance from the physical edifice. Thus, without the physical building, all the other elements remain unintelligible. But perhaps I was drawn to the design because of all the activities in the preparatory phase, this has been the least problematic!

Overall, the creativity of the Architect and the Design team brought out the historic nature of the National Cathedral

project. Watching the systematic progress of work on the design these past three years, one is almost drawn to the conclusion that we are in the midst of a creative revolution in our nation - a development captured by the President in the foreword to the book “Ghana Freedom:

“During the past several years we have seen a flowering of creativity and innovation that matches the early energy and optimism at the beginning of independence... What we are experiencing is what in the future may be looked back upon as a Golden Age of Ghanaian creativity, a time in which our effort to move beyond our boundaries were matched in all spheres: political, economic, social, and cultural.” (Page 9 of *Ghana Freedom*. Ghana Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition *La Biennale Di Venezia*, Koenig Books, London. 2019)

Historically the development of the great Cathedrals has been central to the growth of the arts. There is no doubt in my mind, whatsoever, that the creative work on the National Cathedral represents a watershed moment that will have lasting impact in a number of areas of our national life. One such area is the state of the church in Ghana, and the African continent, where the design of the National Cathedral, almost fulfills the Kenyan theologian John Mbiti's words to the New York Times:

“...Europe and America westernized Christianity. The Orthodox easternized

it. Now it's our turn to Africanize it.”

The National Cathedral of Ghana, designed as an “Architectural expression of African Christianity,” gives practical effect to this **key** aspiration of Mbiti and the Ghanaian/African church. It speaks to the confidence of the African Church to assert itself, after years of emulating the Western church, particularly in relation to Architecture. The design of the National Cathedral, taking its inspiration from biblical history, and engaging with our traditional ways of revealing divinity, marks a key moment in the history of Christianity in Ghana and the African continent. It physicalizes the *moment* when the Ghanaian and African church, by sidestepping the gothic Cathedrals, broke the umbilical cord, architecturally, from the European “messengers” who brought the historical faith. To be sure, the embeddedness of Christianity into African contexts did not begin with the design of the National Cathedral. In the Ghanaian context, the names of Ephraim Amu, Rev. Prof. Kwame Bediako, Emeritus Archbishop Kwasi Sarpong etc comes readily to mind. But, architecturally, it consolidates this movement towards the Africanization of Christianity.

The groundbreaking ensures that we move from design to implementation.

Welcome to the second issue of the National Cathedral Update

“LET'S UNITE BEHIND THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL”

Apostle Eric Nyamekye, Chairman, Church of Pentecost



The Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, Apostle Eric Nyamekye, has called on the Church in Ghana to unite behind the National Cathedral. He made this call at two separate events:

i) first at National Cathedral Prayer meeting on December 29, 2019 in Accra; and ii) second, on January 30, 2020 at the National Cathedral fundraising launch in Kumasi, where He was the Keynote speaker. At the prayer meeting on the site of the National Cathedral on December 29, 2019, Apostle Nyamekye reframed the issues:

*Why should we pray for Churches and Christian organizations to support the National Cathedral Project?
The Cathedral is for us so what is the problem?*

Maybe the problem is that we think temples are unimportant, especially we the evangelicals. We think that once the bible says that you are the temple of God, the blocks and bricks are not important. But they are!

Building on this analogy of a physical temple, he provides the **theological** basis for the National Cathedral.

As he explains:

The presence of the temple in a community signifies the fact that God is amongst them.

Delivering the keynote address at the launch at the launch of fundraising campaign in Kumasi on January 30, 2020, he elaborated further, arguing that, theologically, the presence of a temple, or the National Cathedral that we seek to

build, means the following:

- 1) It signifies that God is in the midst of the people or country.
- 2) It indicates the true character of the people
- 3) It reminds the Christian believer of who or what S/he or she has become in the lord so when you see the temple, you are a temple. So, once you see the temple it reminds you of your righteousness in God.
- 4) The presence of a temple in a city is a challenge to the Christian community to live up to the truth.
- 5) When you see a temple in the city, like we are going to build, it tells us that one day, Christ will sit in the midst of his people. And in his presence, there will be fulness of joy.



Responding to the criticism that God does not dwell in physical temples or Cathedrals, he argues:

Solomon knew all these things that we know. Solomon was sure that God dwells in the heavens, and that even the highest heavens could not contain him. How much less the temple he was building. Solomon knew all this theology before us, but he said "God let your eyes and your ears be attentive to whatever is going to happen in this temple."

And as He explained, God did respond to Solomon by specifying the conditions under which He will be attentive to the prayers offered in the temple. He extrapolates this to the National Cathedral:

Fancy that the National Cathedral has been built, and Ghanaians come together. And God is pleased with us and his eyes and ears are here. What will happen in this nation? What do you think will happen in this nation?

Answering his own rhetorical questions, Apostle Nyamekye referenced God's response to the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple:

¹³ "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, ¹⁴ if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. ¹⁵ Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place (II Chron 7: 13-15).

The key lesson, Apostle Nyamekye stressed, is the contingency of the blessings that come from the presence of a temple among a people. That is, God's willingness to respond to prayers offered in the temple is dependent on his people humbling themselves and turning from their wicked ways. The presence of the temple *per se* is not enough to release God's blessings on a nation. Rather, the temple must be combined with the righteousness of God's people. This has immediate implications for the National Cathedral project. The blessings expected from the building of the National



Cathedral is dependent on the state of the church in Ghana. As God's instrument for transforming the nation, the challenge is to reconstitute the church in Ghana to ensure it lives righteously such that the National Cathedral – the temple – which will be built, will be a true channel of God's presence and blessings on the nation. The first step in this process, is to unite the Church in Ghana in support of the National Cathedral.



“YOUR NAMES WILL BE WRITTEN IN GOLD...!”

H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo : President of the Republic



a burden on the state. That is why we are mobilizing the Christian community at home and abroad to join us in partnership to raise the needed resources to build the cathedral. We seek to build this partnership on the rich history of the churches' involvement in our nation's development. From agriculture, Education, Health amongst other, the church has been a major contributor to our national life and a strong partner of the state--which has chosen for its part to donate the land and a modest seed fund for this development in the partnership.

I am confident of the support of the Ghanaian people, for this coalition of churches, corporations and individuals in bringing this project to fruition. This will be a historic coalition, and the names of the supporters will be written in gold in the annals of our history. I am proud to call myself a leading member of this coalition...!

He expressed his gratitude to the Trustees and the Fundraising committee for working systematically to ensure the development of this historic coalition. As part of the Address, the President indicated that after cutting the sod for the National Cathedral on March 6, 2017; and unveiling the design on March 6, 2018; all is all set for the groundbreaking, and start of construction, on March 5, 2020 - the eve of our 63rd Independence Anniversary!

The President has expressed his satisfaction with the development of the historic coalition to support the National Cathedral project. Delivering his Address at the launch of the National Cathedral's Fundraising campaign in Kumasi on January 30, 2020, the President expressed his gratitude to the Christian community in Kumasi for the massive turn out in support of the National Cathedral.

Recalling the launch of the Fundraising Campaigns in Accra on December 28, 2018, and in Washington DC on February 8, 2019, he explained that the building of the national and transnational coalition is a practical expression of his desire that the construction of the National Cathedral does not put undue pressure on the finances of the state. As he explained:

It is my earnest wish that the building of the national cathedral should not be



LAUNCH OF FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN - KUMASI







PRESIDENT VISITS WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL



President and Dean of the Washington National Cathedral, the Very Rev. Randolph Hollerith

On June 11, 2004, the Washington National Cathedral (WNC), performing one of its traditional national functions, held a funeral service for the 40th President of the USA, Ronald Reagan. In attendance was then US President, George W. Bush, former US Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, George Bush Snr, Bill Clinton - and Ghana's Foreign Minister at the time, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. Fourteen years later, on a cold and rainy February 25, 2018 morning, Nana Akufo-Addo, now President of Ghana, attended a mass at the same Cathedral, and was later given a tour by the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Rev Randolph "Randy" Hollerith. On December 11, 2019, during a courtesy call on him in Accra by Cary Summers, the Founding President of the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC, the President recalled the inspiration the 2004 visit to the WNC gave him for the National Cathedral of Ghana. Since February 2018, the Secretariat of the National Cathedral of Ghana (NCG) has engaged the leadership of the Washington National Cathedral, and in this article, the CEO of the NCG and Editor of the *National Cathedral Update*,



Paul Opoku-Mensah, examines some of the key insights the Washington National Cathedral provides for the the National Cathedral of Ghana.

A NATION GETS ITS “GREAT CHURCH FOR NATIONAL PURPOSES”

The idea of a “Great Church for National Purposes” that was “non-sectarian and nondenominational” was part of the original plan – “Plan of the Federal City” -- developed in 1792 for Washington DC, the US capital by the Architect Pierre L'Enfant, and discussed with George Washington, the first President of the USA. Although nothing happened with the idea for 100 years, eventually in 1893 the Cathedral was established as an Episcopal Cathedral by a congressional charter passed by Congress on January 6, 1893, and signed by then US President Benjamin Harrison. Construction began on September 29, 1907, when the foundation stone was laid by President Theodore Roosevelt at a groundbreaking event witnessed by a crowd of more than 20,000. Five years later, in 1912, one of the chapels – the Bethlehem Chapel - opened for services in the unfinished cathedral and has continued daily ever since. Final construction ended 83 years later, in 1990, when the “final finial” was placed in the presence of President George H. W. Bush. Throughout its history, beginning in 1912 with the use of the Bethlehem Chapel for services, Washington National Cathedral has played significant roles in the life of Washington DC, and the USA. The immedi-



iate past Dean of the Cathedral, Gary Hall, summarizes these roles as follows:

“The Washington National Cathedral was established to hold a special role in the nation's life and continues to answer that call. It fills the role in the United States of the great cathedral churches of Europe in providing a center at which the public might convene and an anchor for the many communities that grow alongside it. ...We host presidential prayer services, state funerals, school commencements, and chapel services. We gather a worshipping community every day and Sunday, we convene conversations about faith and public life across ideological and religious lines, we advocate for Gospel values in the public square, and we also manage to welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors

annually. We are a complex institution living out a historic and evolving mission of local, national, and international service. So we are much more than a building.

But the physical space of the Cathedral is the source of the authority for all we do” The WNC Strategic Plan (Fy2015-2017) provides a template for understanding the past and future roles of the Cathedral that involves four key pillars:

- i) the WNC as a National Church;
- ii) the WNC as a National Treasure;
- iii) the WNC as the seat of the Episcopal Bishop, and
- iv) the WNC as a Convener.

The following discussions draw extensively from the Strategic Plan.



·1) The WNC as a **National Church**. The WNC serves as a sacred place where the country gathers to pray, commemorate, celebrate, and mourn. The Cathedral's founders established it to have special significance for American public life, constructing it as a deeply symbolic focal point on the skyline of the capital city. Its towers survey the monuments where Americans pause to remember specific individuals, communities, and moments in history. It also overlooks the houses of government where the country's path is chartered, implemented, and brought into alignment with founding principles of law. It has been the site for Presidential inaugural services, state funerals, and other key moments in US history. For instance,

Martin Luther King Jr. preached his last sermon at the WNC.

·2) The WNC as a **National Treasure**: The WNC is a national treasure and an architectural masterpiece offering inspiration and a sense of wonder to both visitors and pilgrims. In addition to the historic calling and sacred nature of its work, the Cathedral engages the spirit and the senses. Its sheer size, scale, and overall grandeur present an astonishing work of -and for-permanence in a world of constant change, obsolescence, and decay. Within and without, in magnificently appointed chapels and expansive grounds, the Cathedral creates an atmosphere of stability and refreshment highly appreciated and sorely needed in a major city. As a National Treasure, it is also the burial place of famous Americans including President Harold Wilson.

·3) The WNC as **the Seat of Bishops of the Episcopal Church**: The cathedral is the seat of both the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Washington comprising 89 congregations in the District of Columbia and four Maryland counties. It is where the diocese gathers for sacred events, such as ordinations, confirmation services, and the consecration of its bishops. The bishop of the diocese presides at services on high holy days and other sacred occasions. The Cathedral also serves as the spiritual home for the students, faculty, and staff of the three Cathedral schools, who worship regularly in the Cathedral. They begin and end each academic year in the Cathedral.

·4) The WNC as a **Convener**: One of its most important roles, the WNC convenes conversations about faith and public life across ideological and religious lines, and advocates for Christian values in the public square. As a Convener, the Cathedral's programs have had global reach, and honor a vision for the Cathedral to serve as a center for continual learning and intellectual enrichment - not only about the mission field of the Church but also those causes and concerns shared by people throughout the world. Thus, the Cathedral convening programs have long invited the public to consider major issues of the times.



WNC AS INSPIRATION FOR THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL OF GHANA

The National Cathedral of Ghana does not seek to replicate the Washington National Cathedral in Accra. Just as the Washington National Cathedral was inspired by Westminster Abbey in London, yet emerged as one tailored to the US context, the National Cathedral of Ghana builds on the specificities of Ghanaian history and aspirations. This notwithstanding, the Washington National Cathedral provides a schema to understand the potential roles of the NCG. In the discussions that follow, therefore, the framework will be adopted for this purpose.

THE ROOTS

While the roots of the Washington National Cathedral lay in discussions in the early years of the development of Washington DC, the idea of a National Cathedral of Ghana, - as an infrastructure for the religious and solemn activities of the state - was first introduced into the national discourse by the President on March 6, 2017, the 60th Anniversary of our Independence.

Yet the antecedents for the National Cathedral could, somehow, be traced to the formative years of the country. For instance, in the discussions about the new nation that was to emerge from the Gold Coast, the "doyen of Ghanaian politics," Dr. JB Danquah, whose rigorous research provided the name "Ghana" for the new nation, also did work on the values that

should underpin the new nation. Fifty-seven (57) years ago, on 15th March 1963, and in a presentation titled "African Culture and African Religion" Dr J.B. Danquah was categorical about the importance of faith, in particular Christian faith and values, to the building of the new nation, Ghana:

"I believe that Christianity has all the values of an enlightened civilization that modern philosophy and modern society and modern democracy can give us...It is my view that this nation, above all, must attain the civilization of a Christian people if she is to be capable of fitting herself for her role, a mighty role in Africa..."

Similarly, in a presentation on May 22, 1960 titled "The Path that Leads to National Greatness", the Ghanaian musicologist and Patriot, Dr Ephraim Amu problematizes the question of National Greatness, and offers a pathway to greatness for the newly-independent Ghana:

"Our highest and greatest aspiration should be the kingship of God in individual hearts and throughout the nation and the whole continent."

To the extent that a Cathedral is simply the architectural expression of Christian values and the quest to put God at the center of our national life, as expressed by our National Anthem, - and NOT to create a Christian State! - the antecedents of the National Cathedral could be said to be linked to these founding aspirations for the country.



THE NCG AS A NATIONAL CHURCH

The National Cathedral of Ghana seeks to mimic the great Cathedrals with a national character. Unlike the denominational WNC, the National Cathedral of Ghana addresses a missing gap in the Nation's Architecture by providing an interdenominational church for national purposes. It will serve as the church for the solemn activities of the state. Given that these functions are located in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it will build on this historical reality and provide the infrastructure for the religious activities of the state.

THE NCG AS A NATIONAL TREASURE

The National Cathedral is conceived as a National Treasure - a National Monument and legacy project linked to the 60th Anniversary celebrations. Designed by one of the iconic Architects in the world and a son of the land, Sir David Adjaye, the Cathedral represents a national monument that will inspire and awe. Located in biblical history, the design engages the cultural context, particularly the dominant chieftaincy civilization in which divinity is revealed in traditional society. It is a revolutionary archite-

ctural expression of African Christianity, and a discontinuity of the dominant "Christian Architecture" in Africa. Like the WNC, it will dominate the Accra landscape, including the monumental core of the capital. It will be a living monument, and national treasure, that will inspire the nation.

THE NCG AS A CATHEDRAL FOR INTERDENOMINATIONAL WORSHIP

Unlike the WNC, the National Cathedral of Ghana is conceived, and implemented, as an interdenominational house of prayer. Thus, it will not be the seat of any denominational Bishop.

Indeed, what distinguishes the NCG is that it is a partnership between the State and the entire Christian community in Ghana, rather than one denomination.

Yet, in a context where the Church in Ghana is almost paralyzed by excessive denominationalism, with the denominations providing another layer of division in a polarized country, the National Cathedral offers a unique opportunity to begin a truly interdenominational service in one of the chapels. While aspects will have to be worked out in detail, this is one of the levels at which the National Cathedral could serve

as a truly unifying space and infrastructure by bridging the denominational gap.

THE NCG AS A CONVENER.

The National Cathedral of Ghana is conceived both as a physical infrastructure and a convening platform where the critical conversations on faith will take place. Like the iconic infrastructure itself, the convening platform will significantly address the deployment of Christian faith and values in the nation's transformation. Specifically, the National Cathedral, and its Faith conversations, will be a call to put God at the center of our nation's transformation. The *conversations* will link up with similar African and global conversations, including the African Diaspora. The convening platform, and the conversations, would also seek to foster the peace and tolerance that the country has so far enjoyed among the various faith communities.

In effect, while the National Cathedral Ghana does not seek to bring the Washington National Cathedral to Ghana, it does take inspiration from the WNC. In so doing, the National Cathedral of Ghana, like the Washington National Cathedral, builds on the rich history of the great Cathedrals of the world and their roles in history.

CARY SUMMERS, AN ADVISOR FOR NCG OPERATIONS JOINS THE TEAM



A key objective is to develop the National Cathedral into an iconic and economically viable infrastructure that will serve as regional site for pilgrimage, and international tourism. Concretely, this means developing the National Cathedral as a “living monument,” and building an “economic engine” into its operations.

The Board of Trustees, at its meeting on December 10, 2019 accepted the proposal of the Executive Director to appoint an Advisor to support this development of the National Cathedral into an economically sustainable site for pilgrimage and tourism.

The “Operations” Advisor, Cary Summers, is the Founding President of the Museum of the Bible in Washington DC. As President, Mr. Summers oversaw

the creation of the organization, planning, implementation, construction, content development, program development, operating procedures, and the opening operations of the Washington D.C. museum. The Museum of the Bible is the world's largest museum featuring the Bible and is the fourth largest museum in Washington D.C. spanning 450,000 square feet.

Mr. Summers is also the Founder and CEO of The Nehemiah Group formed in 1998 which provides consulting services to for-profit organizations primarily in the tourism industry and not-for-profit organizations primarily involving faith-based exhibits, museums, discovery centers, and business initiatives linking to Israel. The Nehemiah Group has been or is involved with projects such as:

Nazareth Village Israel, The Creation Museum, The Ark Encounter, Habitat for Humanity's Global Village, creation of the traveling exhibits for Museum of the Bible, creation of the Global Water Center, Magdala Israel archeological excavation and visitor center, Passages Israel, the Great Freedom Train, Hebrew University's traveling archeology exhibits and Cloisters on the Platte retreat center.

Mr. Summers was also President and CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment /Silver Dollar City Corporation, prior to forming the Nehemiah Group and Museum of the Bible. Herschend Family Entertainment operates 22 themed attractions including theme parks, aquariums, waterparks, shopping centers, theatres, hotels and dinner theatres and is recognized as a global leader in the theme industry.

Over the last forty years, Mr. Summers has served in an executive role with the famed Abercrombie and Fitch retailer as general manager (when it was a sporting goods company) and served as vice president of Bass Pro Shops, the world's largest sporting goods retailer. Mr. Summers founded Churchill Coffee Company, Adventure Legacy and Legends -tourism consulting, Treasures of the Holy Land- creation of faith-based merchandise, and co-founded Destination, Concepts and Development – creators of themed atmospheres; and Nehemiah Partners -assisting faith based organization in fundraising. He is one of the founders and Emeritus CEO





of Nazareth Village - Nazareth, Israel (first- century village sharing the teachings of and about Jesus in a very difficult part of the world), and currently serves on the board of directors of the Miracle of Nazareth International Foundation. The Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, together with the Ministry of Tourism of the State of Israel recognized Cary as the recipient of the Eleventh Annual "Night to Honor our Christian Allies" Tourism Award for his steadfast commitment to bringing tourism to the State of Israel and for his endless contribution to the Jewish State. Mr. Summers also received

the Missourian of the year award in 2019 for recognition of 30 years of accomplishments.

Since February 2018, the Secretariat of the National Cathedral has had intense discussions, with Cary Summers becoming a passionate advocate for the National cathedral project. He graciously showed all the operations of the Museum, facilitated the visit of different set of Ghanaian visitors—Trustees, Finance Minister, the President - culminating in the Museum hosting the launch of the National Cathedral's Fundraising

campaign in February 2019.

On his advisory role, Cary Summers says: "I have retired thrice but each time I get drawn by a project with the potential to change the world. That is why I accepted the challenge to build the Museum of the Bible. I see the same potential in the National Cathedral of Ghana."



THE SUPREME COURT, RELIGION AND THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

Paul Opoku-Mensah, PhD



In three separate, but interrelated rulings, the Supreme Court of Ghana has removed potential legal challenges to the construction of the National Cathedral. In the first ruling, the Supreme Court, chaired by Justice Mrs. Adinyira ruled on a case brought by a member of the Convention People's Party, Mr Kwame Bomfeh, praying the apex court of the land to declare as unconstitutional the support of the state for the construction of the National Cathedral. Specifically he sought the Supreme court to i) declare as unconstitutional the allocation of public lands for the construction of the National Cathedral ii) declare as "excessive entanglement", and therefore unconstitutional, the state's involvement in religion iii) declare as unconstitutional the state's support of the Muslim Hajj to

Mecca, iv) declare as unconstitutional the state's support for the National Cathedral project as it is excessive entanglement of the state in religion. In the second ruling, on November 26, 2019, a seven-member panel of the Supreme Court chaired by Justice Jones Dotse dismissed an application initiated by a businessman Jonathan Holm, through his lawyer Bright Akwetey, seeking the Supreme Court to rule that the President acted unconstitutionally in allowing state land, acquired for public purposes, to be used in manner that does not serve the public interest (to build a National Cathedral in fulfillment of a personal pledge by the President). The plaintiff was therefore praying the court to cite the President for contempt.

In the third and final ruling, on February 18, 2020, a seven-member Supreme Court panel chaired by Chief Justice Anin Yeboah, in a unanimous decision refused an application seeking to halt ongoing construction works on the National Cathedral. The application filed by the businessman, Alfred Holm, following the beginning of preparatory work on the Cathedral site, argued that the construction should be halted till the substantive case of whether the land could be given out by the government for a different purpose, rather than what it was purchased for is determined. The lawyer for the plaintiff, Mr Bright Akwetey argued that stopping the preparatory construction works may prevent any costs to the state if the court was to rule in favour of the plaintiff. But dismissing the application Tuesday [February

18, 2020], the Supreme Court presided over by the Chief Justice, Justice Anin Yeboah said provisions have been made by the law to deal with such events.

By far the January 23, 2019 decision by the Supreme Court, dealing with the constitutionality of government involvement in the national Cathedral project, and the setting up of the Hajj Board, is the most far reaching and significant. In the judgment of the Supreme court:

It is our considered opinion that the acts complained of i.e. the construction of the National Cathedral and the setting up of the Hajj Board does not contravene the guarantees of the freedom of religion and manifestation of beliefs of the people of Ghana. The State is free to lend support or aid to a religious group if it deems such beneficence to be for the good of the nation.

We rather see the government's plan to build a National Cathedral and the setting up of the Hajj Board as the desire of the state to provide for social cohesion and unity in a country where 88.8 percent of its population is predominantly Christian and Islamic. We find this to be in tune with the political and social objectives as set out in the Directive Principles of State Policy under the provisions of articles 35 and 37 of the Constitution.

The Supreme court also ruled that: ... we do not find any constitutional issue that is legitimately raised around the constitutional authority of the President to allocate the land for the purpose stated."

The decision of the Supreme Court does more than remove the legal hurdles to the construction of the National Cathedral. In addition to giving the go-ahead for the construction of the National Cathedral, the decision also opens up, and provides a template for addressing a crucial yet unresolved question in our nation building project. That is:

What should be the posture of the state towards religion, religious



organizations, and religious identity in a secular democracy?

Conversely, what roles should religion, religious organizations, and religious identity play in a secular democracy?

These questions are important because despite the ubiquitous role of religion, religious institutions, and religious identity in our national life, a paradox of silence exists on this issue with religion almost consigned to the private sphere of society. But in a society where almost 90% of the population are religious, secularism cannot mean a lack of engagement between the state and religion.

As the Supreme Court argues:

*"...the Constitution does not specifically prohibit the Government from **supporting, assisting or cooperating** with religious groups. What the letter and spirit of the constitutional provisions forbids is the state hindering freedom of worship, religion and belief in the country and discrimination on grounds of religion"*

The Supreme court then brings finality to the issue:

OBVIOUSLY, secularism in the context of the Ghana Constitution must be understood to allow, and even encourage State recognition and accommodation of religion and religious identity ***(my emphasis)***

This, to my understanding, is a landmark ruling that both normalizes and legitimizes the deployment of religion, religious organizations and religious identity in our nation building project. It negates the lingering suspicion and almost adversarial framing of the relations between the state and religion. Rather than conflict, the ruling documents the extensive area of partnership between the state and religious organizations in different domains of national life. It also provides pointers to where this relationship can be fruitfully deployed to create national cohesion, a key ingredient in nation building. The Supreme Court's ruling helps resolve this paradox of silence for the nation by deconstructing the issue away from the strictures of legal jargon, in which it is often enmeshed, and describing it in the ordinary language of nation building.

PRAYER CAMPAIGN FOR THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL CONTINUES





NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SECRETARIAT HONOURS US SENATOR, JIM INHOFE



A delegation from the US Congress, led by Senator Jim Inhofe, the Head of the powerful Armed Services Committee of the US Senate, was in Ghana on February 18, 2020 for a day's working visit. At a reception at the Labadi Beach Hotel, the evening of February 18, the National Cathedral presented an award to Senator Inhofe and two of his staff: Luke Holland, his Chief of Staff, and Mark Powers, his Africa Policy Advisor.

Explaining the rationale for the award, the Executive Director of the National Cathedral, Paul Opoku-Mensah acknowledged the role of Senator Inhofe, and his staff, in facilitating the National Cathedral's relations with two institutions in Washington DC, namely

i) the Washington National Cathedral, and
ii) the Museum of the Bible.

As He explained it:

On February 7, 2018, two emails left the office of Senator Inhofe to two institutions in Washington DC, namely:

i) the Washington National Cathedral, and ii) the Museum of the Bible. The emails, written by Luke Holland, the Chief of Staff of Senator Inhofe, were in response to a request I had made to Senator Inhofe the previous day, February 6, for his help to meet the leadership of these two institutions....

I had requested to meet with the leadership of the Washington National Cathedral because it provided part of the inspiration for the National Cathedral of Ghana... For the Museum of the Bible, I wanted to meet the leadership because in operationalizing the vision for the National Cathedral, we wanted it to be a living monument which will constantly generate activity. In addition, we wanted to build an economic engine into the Cathedral project such that once it is completed, it will not place undue financial burdens on the state and/or the churches, but generate its own internal resources for operations and



maintenance.

The Museum of the Bible provided both the inspiration, and the template for doing so

Dr. Opoku-Mensah explained that these two emails have resulted in growing relations between the National Cathedral and these two institutions. In the case of the Bible Museum, it resulted in the Museum hosting a number of Ghanaian visitors, including the President; and also co-hosting the launch of the US Fundraising campaign on February 8, 2019 at the Museum.

Explaining the gifts, the Executive Director indicated that the use of the Adinkra symbols is an acknowledgment of Senator Inhofe's commitment to the African continent, at the US Senate. As he explained, besides Senator Inhofe's official work at the Senate for African issues, hardly any African goes to the US National Prayer Breakfast without going through his Senate offices and/or participating in the Africa Dinner that he hosts every year in the grand caucus room of the Russell Senate building the evening of the National Prayer Breakfast. The symbols therefore honour Senator Inhofe's leadership, and his unapologetic integration of his faith in his work.



LAND PREPARATION FOR THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL



A FINAL WORD - FROM THE TRUSTEES

'Ever Ancient, Ever New" By St. Augustine of Hippo, North Africa.



This edition of the National Cathedral of Ghana UPDATE is in your hands during the great Festivals of the Christian tradition-LENT. It is a Period of reflection on the suffering, death and resurrection of the Head of the Church, JESUS CHRIST. The Trustees represent the Unity and Diversity of Christianity in Ghana.

As a National Monument, the ground breaking for the National Cathedral takes place when the Nation celebrates her 63rd Independence Anniversary. The motto is Freedom and Justice. Christianity is instrumental in the rise of Gold Coast/Ghana. As human beings we represent the Temple of God/the Peoples Cathedral. Progress in law, education, economics, architecture, health, safety and better

standards of living are good ends one can certainly find Christians warrant for them.

We reflect on the Cathedral as the Temple of God uniting the Various Christian Traditions in Ghana. §The various Creeds based on the Bible binds us together

* Through History, building Temples of God, Cathedral, etc are built at a cost. The cost involve HUMAN, FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES. In the same vein Christianity came to this nation with building of the peoples Cathedral.

* However there is the need to CONTROL COST of the National Cathedral Project.

* And that is the reason why:

•All of us during this Lentern period of

40 days of fasting contemplation, prayers, etc must focus on the Church, the Cathedral, Nation Building and Peace. •Pray for political and religious leaders to rent their hearts and not their garments.

•Pray for the Electoral Commission for courage in dealing with the constitutional requirements for the new voters register. •Courage for all stakeholders in dealing with the Galamsay menace and measures to avert continuous destruction destroying of our water bodies and land. •Pray for the Executives, Legislature and Judiciary. •Scripture passages: Joel 22¹⁷⁻¹⁷ | Psalm 51¹⁻¹⁷ | 2 Corinthians 5²⁰ 6¹⁰ | Matthew 6^{1-6, 16-21}

Most Rev. Dr S. Asante Antwi,
Chairman, Board of Trustees.



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