

# **Migrant-Shaped Urban Mission:**

---

**The missionary nature and initiatives of The Church of  
Pentecost, USA**

ALLISON NORTON

DOI: 10.7252/Paper.000067

## ABSTRACT

In contemporary literature on urban mission, cities are often characterized as spiritual deserts: the “unreached,” “unclaimed frontier” of Christian mission. However, it is precisely within these contexts where vibrant immigrant congregations are thriving. The places disproportionately affected by immigrant flows are not necessarily countries, but cities—85 percent of immigrants in America live in the 100 largest metropolitan areas. In a time when nearly 70% of immigrants to the United States self-identify as Christian, this paper challenges assumptions that cities are unreached and the wider tendency to neglect how Christian immigrants are transforming the American religious landscape. Using qualitative data from research on the Ghanaian-led Church of Pentecost, USA, this paper explores African Pentecostal migrant-shaped mission in the city, focusing on its church planting initiatives and transnational orientation through embodied practice as migrants and their descendants seek to bring the gospel of Christ to bear on the needs and realities of life in a new context.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in what is widely called the “age of migration” (Castles and Miller 2009). International migration is a global phenomenon that continues to grow in scope, complexity, and impact. There are more people on the move today than ever before: the 2013 United Nations Population Division estimates that 232 million people are international migrants (2013), and the number has more than doubled in 25 years (Koser 2007, 5). The United States, a nation historically built on immigration, remains the most popular destination, attracting about 20 percent of all international migrants and reaching an all-time high of 46 million international migrants in 2013. Nearly 13 percent of U.S. residents are immigrants, and that figure rises to about one-quarter of the overall U.S. population when adding the U.S.-born second generation (Zong and Batlova 2015).

Although the great wave of immigration that has taken place over the past few decades has included a wide variety of people from various world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, for example—the majority of those who immigrate to America (67%) are Christian (2015b). Even as the overall percentage of Americans who self-identify as Christian is in decline (dipping from 78.4% in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014), Christians in America are becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. According to the recent Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study, 41% percent of Catholics, 24% of evangelical Protestants, and 14% of mainline Protestants are racial and ethnic minorities (Murphy 2015). And particularly in urban contexts, the church “next door” is increasingly led by or comprised of Christians from African, Asian, or Latin American descent. Christianity exists in diaspora communities in many cities in the United States, providing spaces where diverse Christian communities rub shoulders, practicing their faith in ways that contribute to the ever-increasing plurality of Christian expression. As Stephen Warner explains, post-1965 immigration to the US has not led to the “de-Christianization” of American society, but rather to the “de-Europeanization of American Christianity” (Warner 2000, 274).

Although trends over the last decade indicate that immigrants are dispersing not just to the traditional gateway cities, but also to more and smaller places, they continue to be attracted to the nation’s largest metropolitan areas and are still underrepresented in suburban communities (Wilson and Svajlenka 2014). Nearly 65% of the total immigrant population in the U.S. resides in the twenty most

populous metropolitan areas. To put this in perspective, there are more foreign-born New Yorkers than there are people living in Chicago, America's third largest city. In 2000, 60% of West African immigrants lived in a metropolitan area, with nearly 40% residing in the central city: the highest percentage among all African immigrants (Takyi and Boate 2006, 59). Although increasing numbers of immigrants are moving to the suburbs, immigrants continue to have a disproportionate impact on cities. Therefore, migrant mission is often urban mission (Herppich 2011).

In the past two decades, we have also witnessed the “ascendancy of African and African-led churches and para-church groups with a deep sense of mission and evangelism crossing geographical, cultural, racial, and linguistic boundaries” (Omenyo 2013, 41). American cities are spaces for new churches and new movements. Yet despite the significant numbers of Christian immigrants who reside in American cities, there is a nation-wide tendency to neglect how the religiosity of these new immigrants is transforming the American religious landscape. Migrants are often characterized as poor, powerless, and passive—as objects of mission with little to contribute toward Christian mission or evangelization within urban contexts. Währisch-Oblau indicates that immigrant Christians and congregations in Germany “represent a Christianity that, if noticed at all, is mostly perceived to be foreign, transient, and diasporal, in short: a minority phenomenon which might need some protection and support, but nothing that would have an impact on majority Christianity” (2009, 4). Similar sentiments can be found in the relationship between immigrant and native-born Christian populations in the United States.

This is somewhat unsurprising in light of the persistent characterization among certain evangelical missiological circles of cities as spiritual deserts: urban contexts that are “unreached,” representing the “unclaimed frontier” of twentieth-century mission. Starting in the 1970s, cities within evangelical missiological literature were often conceptualized as the target of mission penetration, driven by strategies for reaching the (unreached) peoples and the migrants who are now at our doorstep (Greenway and Monsma 2000, Casiño, Fujino, and Sisk 2012, Payne 2012). The (unforeseen?) result of linking strategic emphasis on unreached people groups, immigration, and cities is that Christian migrant presence and agency within these contexts is often overlooked. However, many immigrant congregations are thriving within these urban contexts where so many Christian immigrants live, work, and worship. In a study on African immigrant faith in New York City, Mark Gornik (2011) suggests that Christianity is flourishing in these areas that

are “overlooked” and “neglected” – in the margins where Christian immigrants are establishing congregations with evangelistic zeal.

Therefore, this paper contributes to understanding the agency of Christian migrants in urban ministry by exploring the mission of a Ghanaian-led global Pentecostal movement, The Church of Pentecost, USA, in various cities in the United States. This research is based on participant observation (from 2007-current) in four Church of Pentecost congregations, and interviews with church leaders and members. I explore the migrant-shaped mission of the church in two domains: church planting and the transnational community.

## **THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST, USA: MIGRANT-SHAPED MISSION IN AMERICAN CITIES**

Religious and spiritual experiences are both formed and transformed by the migration experience. Migration itself is a “dynamic process that many African immigrants infuse with religious significance and that, in turn, shapes religious practice and community building” (Olupona and Gemignani 2007:8). Of course, there are many economic pull factors that promote international migration, but the move to America is imbued with a divine sense of purpose for many Africans: they envision hope for a better economic future, but also see themselves as agents of hope with a missionary message for the American context (Bongmba 2007:107). The very fact that African Christian immigrants bring their faith with them as they migrate to the US represents what Bongmba calls the “portability” of the Christian faith and a “global mission project of the Christian tradition” (2007:102). Gerloff further points to the missional role of African immigrant Christians in deconstructing a “colonial mission” model, leading to a potential “renewal of contemporary Christianity, the ‘rebirth’ of African theology, and the lived-out diasporic conviction that our universal humanity counts more than any nation state” (2009:16).

The Ghanaian-led Church of Pentecost (CoP), the largest Protestant denomination in Ghana, arose out of the efforts of Ghanaian Pastor Peter Newman Anim in 1922 and later Irish missionary James McKeown in the 1930s. From the beginning, “it was made to be related to the Ghanaian soil, without losing its rooting in Christ and the Bible” (Larbi 2001:243). It developed as a fully indigenous and

self-supported church, as McKeown's strategy was "just to evangelize," allowing the growth of the church to occur through largely Ghanaian-led initiatives (Onyinah 2004, 221). A commitment to evangelism has been one of the core values of the church since the beginning (Larbi 2004, 144).

The church's growth has not stopped with Ghana, and it "appears to be the African church with the highest number of congregations outside its national boundaries" (Omenyo 2013, 50). The CoP has branches in over 84 different countries, with a total membership of nearly 2 million. At the end of 2014, there were 152 congregations in the U.S. with a membership of nearly 18,000 (2015a). The international growth of the CoP was not originally an organized endeavor, but is inherently linked with migration and the transnational networks of its members. In response to the exodus of many Ghanaians who migrated from Ghana in search of better economic opportunities in the 1980s, the CoP established an official missionary network, under the office of the International Mission Director. The International Missions Office oversees the work of all church branches outside of Ghana. In line with this centralized structure, the term "missionary" is used to describe the work of all pastors who either work outside of Ghana or outside of their countries of origin. The centralized structure of the church, which is organized along clear hierarchical lines of authority, is especially appropriate to the Ghanaian culture and promotes a sense of security, accountability, and discipline (Onyinah 2004, 223). When paired with the strong emphasis on lay leadership and creative initiatives, the church's structure has greatly facilitated the worldwide spread and growth of the CoP.

The church's vision and mission is that "It exists to bring all people everywhere to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the gospel, the planting of churches and the equipping of believers for every God-glorifying service" (The Church of Pentecost 2011). The fulfillment of this vision and the interpretation of the church's mission is rooted in prophetic utterances, starting in the 1940s, which proclaimed that God would raise up a nation out of Africa to be a light to the world, bringing up an international church that would send missionaries to the entire world (2000, 149). Echoed in these prophecies is the belief that the CoP has something unique to contribute to the world, and is thus contributing to world evangelization through mission to the Ghanaian diaspora (Onyinah 2004, 235).

Along with the International Missions Office, there are several other institutional structures supporting the church's evangelistic emphasis. These include Evangelism Week, Internal Missions Week, and McKeown's Missions Week: times set aside each year to raise money, pray, and preach on mission. Monthly missionary offerings are given, and the witness ministry (of which every regular churchgoer is considered an automatic member) facilitates evangelism activities such as passing out tracts or working with local food kitchens or other community services. However, these institutionally supported activities do not fully describe the mission of the Church of Pentecost, particularly in urban contexts shaped by migration. Rather, the core theology of the priesthood of all believers that encourages each member to view mission as a part of everyday life provides a better window into the mission of the church. Therefore, this paper will explore two avenues of migrant-shaped mission within the Church of Pentecost that are rooted in the lived experiences of Ghanaian immigrants. First, mission is understood as achieved through the grace of God in the growth of local congregations through church planting. Second, the church acts as a transnational community, demonstrating how migrant-shaped mission cannot be understood without a transnational lens.

### **The local congregation as hermeneutic of the gospel: church-planting initiatives**

Church growth through the planting of new congregations is perhaps the most common example of migrant-shaped mission in the Church of Pentecost. The 2015 USA National Council Report encourages the creation of new districts in the United States—most of which would include multiple congregations under a single pastor—to “accelerate the growth of the church” (2015a, 6). Using lay leaders for the establishment of new congregations is a normal and encouraged practice of the church. Most congregations in urban contexts in the United States were started by either 1) Ghanaian immigrants who initiated small prayer gatherings that ultimately grew into official congregations, or 2) the intentional “split” of existing congregations to plant new churches in nearby cities. Although the hierarchical structure and categorization of the church facilitates church expansion, both methods are established largely through the efforts of local members and lay leaders, rather than through strategic initiatives of the national or international church leadership.

The active service of a strong lay leadership is a core feature of the Church of Pentecost. The church cultivates a robust theology of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:4-10) and all members are expected to contribute their time, money, and talents for the growth of the church. This is demonstrated by a song often sung in the church, which calls members to “work for the Lord always” (Larbi 2004, 157). Therefore, the role of evangelism is a task for the entire church community. Although each CoP congregation includes a ministry department dedicated to witness and evangelism, the task of evangelism is not relegated to a sub-segment of the church: it is the responsibility of each member, youth and old alike. The zeal expressed by one congregation’s youth and college leader is common:

We realize that we [the young people] have to do it [evangelism] rather than the church doing [it]. The church will do it; they have crusades and all that. But we the young people need to start one-on-one evangelism.

This self-perception that the primary task of believers is evangelism brings unity to CoP diaspora church members spread around the globe (Aßhom and Becker 2011, 166). And it is this presence of African Christian immigrants in the West that leads Jehu J. Hanciles to refer to every Christian migrant as a potential missionary (Hanciles 2008). Attentiveness to the priority of the local congregation in mission also gives fresh insight into the church’s desire to develop multicultural worshipping communities. As Afe Adogame portrays, many African immigrant congregations in the United States have a global vision for mission and a faith that extends across boundaries, but generally “lack a cross-cultural appeal” (Adogame 2013, 80). It is true that the majority of Church of Pentecost members in the United States are either Ghanaian immigrants or their descendants; just 5.5% of church members are not (2015a). However, the church views their primarily Ghanaian congregations as “springboards:” the Ghanaian Christian community provides a solid foundation upon which efforts can be made to reach out to non-Ghanaians (Onyinah 2004, Bredwa-Mensah 2004).

The ability to develop thriving multicultural or non-Ghanaian congregations is also often viewed as the task of the next generation: second-generation Ghanaian Americans who can more easily navigate the bridges between Ghanaian and American cultures. However, two CoP Spanish-speaking congregations have been

recently planted and the U.S. is also seen as the “springboard” for the church’s congregations in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Costa Rica, Trinidad, and Belize. Although some strides are being made in crosscultural evangelism and church membership, it is also important to realize that reaching the Ghanaian diaspora and the very presence of the church in the West is seen as a contribution to world evangelization (Onyinah 2004, 235).

Another way this “springboard” method is enacted is through planting Pentecost International Worship Centers, congregations where services are conducted entirely in English or in a mixture of languages reflecting the makeup of the members. In the 1980s, the CoP started “English Assemblies” with a vision to create a “well-organised, cross-cultural church for people of non-Ghanaian cultural background who want a place to worship God” (Larbi 2001:202). The formation of the English Assemblies, later named Pentecost International Worship Centers (PIWC), grew out of an acknowledgment that the evangelistic efforts of the church could not be limited to only one segment of society. Rather, God desired for the CoP to reach out to the entire world, including people who were quite different from the founding church members. In the United States, PIWCs often serve a dual role: as a place of belonging for the second generation who primarily prefer to worship in English, and as a congregation that is intentionally multicultural. Most districts in the U.S. include at least one PIWC congregation.

The way the CoP prioritizes church planting demonstrates how they conceive of contributing to world evangelization through their international, often urban, presence. Scott Sunquist identifies the role of congregations in urban mission by pointing to how local churches represent “the first and the last hope for the city,” claiming that any mission strategy that overlooks this “weak” witness “is not looking with spiritual eyes” (Sunquist 2013, 366). By planting churches with congregations of praying, Pentecostal Christians in cities across the United States, the CoP enacts its local and global mission. This is reminiscent of Newbigin’s view of the congregation as “God’s embassy in a certain place” (Newbigin 1989, 229). As he states, “the only possible hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation which believes it” (Newbigin 1989, 232). Newbigin’s congregational hermeneutic suggests a “public, visible missionality” (Cronshaw and Taylor 2014, 213). Immigrant congregations are often identified as public sites for integrating immigrants into American civil society and membership in religious institutions is one area of civic engagement that immigrants participate in with much greater regularity than the

American mainstream (Foley and Hoge 2007:9). But they are also sites of “public” expressions of faith. This is not a privatized faith, but an embodied gospel that is expressed through the everyday lives of church members and lay leaders within the cities where they work and live.

### **Transnational religious community: Mission across borders**

In addition to recognizing the global church planting initiatives of CoP, it is also vital to have an appropriate lens to explore ways in which the mission of the Church of Pentecost transgresses national borders and locally established congregations. This does not indicate the end of the imprint of the nation-state and immigration policy to the mission of the church. Rather, it is a recognition that the CoP acts as a multipolar transnational community, linking members to a global community of believers who see their primary identities as both African and supranational: as “citizens of heaven” (Adogame 2013, 130-35, Daswani 2015). Transnational ties are formed both at the level of individual migrants and through the wider institutional initiatives of the church. Thus, transnationalism as used here refers to “some combination of plural civic-political membership, economic involvements, social networks, and cultural identities reaching across and linking people (here, immigrants) and institutions in two or more nation-states in diverse, multilayered patterns” (Morawska 2009, 31).

The role of *religious* identities and institutions in forging and sustaining transnational ties is a considerable emerging topic that is beginning to gain traction among scholars of transnational studies (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Levitt 2007, Ebaugh and Chafetz 2002, Kivisto 2014). In many immigrant congregations, the frequent travel of religious leaders and church members facilitates the flow of information and communication between destination countries and the homeland (Biney 2005, Guest 2003, Fortuny-Loret de Mola 2002, Krause 2008). Afe Adogame calls this a type of “spiritual remittance” system, in which the international travel of church leaders facilitates transnational connections and networks between churches located around the world (2009:9). Beyond solely *remitting* spiritual ideas and beliefs, there is also *reciprocity* (if not always symmetry) in these transnational flows. In this manner, the transnational networks of the Church of Pentecost facilitate unidirectional mission.

Therefore, a transnational perspective emphasizes the ways in which migrants' lives, networks, religions, and churches do not stop at national borders but go beyond them. This implies looking beyond the nation-state as the main unit of analysis and recognizing the way mission is conceived when a local congregation is also part of a larger transnational religious community: a transnational social field. Using Faist's definition, transnational social spaces "consist of combinations of sustained social and symbolic ties, their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in multiple states" (Faist 2000, 199). These spaces emerge within the Church of Pentecost when it operates across borders by establishing church congregations in the countries of immigration that are linked to the mother church in Ghana along with the vast network of CoP congregations around the globe. The CoP acts as a transnational religious community based on shared identities, beliefs, and values, "constituting a mechanism that can function as a bridge between distant places" (Aßhom and Becker 2011, 147).

The Church of Pentecost facilitates transnational engagement in numerous domains, including flows of people, money, beliefs, and practices. The transnationalization of the church has largely occurred due to the migration of Ghanaians: the "global culture of the mobility of labour has helped some of these immigrants belong to The Church of Pentecost, they soon share their faith with others and organize their converts into prayer and Bible study groups" (Memorial lectures 126-27). Aßhom and Becker highlight two types of CoP transnational social mobility: the mobility of Ghanaian migrant members and the mobility of CoP leaders (2011, 160). Transnational mobility does play an important role in the creation and sustaining of transnational religious flows within the Church of Pentecost. However, analyzing mobility alone tends to underestimate the involvement of non-migrants and media in the transnational social field. A thorough description of the ways in which CoP acts as a transnational social field is beyond the scope of this article. However, I will share several snapshots of how the cross-border practices of migrant and non-migrant CoP members and the wider organizational structure of the CoP mould the church's mission:

*Networks of people:*

At the relational-behavioral level, social relationships persist within the CoP "at a distance," with "social practices creating systematic connections" between

both origin and destination countries, as well as with other poles within the CoP community (Boccagni 2012, 297). In addition to sustained media communication, communication across national boundaries regularly occurs as church leaders from Ghana and other parts of the world visit CoP congregations in the West, and vice versa, forming dense and highly active networks spanning vast spaces. In the past five years, the Los Angeles district has received visits from the National Head, the International Missions Director, the International Chairman and many other apostles and pastors originating outside of the United States. Diaspora church leaders and members also regularly visit Ghana, Germany, the United Kingdom and other regions with large Ghanaian diaspora communities. The interchange of official visits between the diaspora church and its headquarters in Ghana demonstrates reciprocity and this experience of translocality points to the ways CoP members experience social relationships across borders, motivated in part by their participation within the religious transnational community of the CoP. These are networks with a religious function: leaders and members carry religious ideas and media with them, facilitating multidirectional flows from countries of origin to diaspora communities and vice versa, as well as along other transnational pathways connecting sites such as the U.K., Italy, Germany, Nigeria, and China.

### *Avenues of Capital:*

At the micro-level, CoP congregations in cities across the United States regularly initiate the sending of money and goods to congregations of their kin and friends located in Ghana and worldwide. For example, the Los Angeles district has started supporting church planting efforts in Uganda, due to a connection made through the Los Angeles district pastor's mother: the national head of the church in Uganda was her former pastor. When the Los Angeles pastor heard of the need in Uganda, he energized the congregations in Los Angeles to financially support the evangelism and church planting efforts of the Ugandan CoP.

The financial system of the church also sustains regular transnational monetary networks. Offerings are given at annual "internal mission's week" programs in the U.S. and are sent to support the work of the church in Latin America, efforts initiated from the United States. Additionally, special missionary offerings (reflecting the church's particular emphasis on mission) are taken once a month in all CoP assemblies. This funding is then allocated and distributed through the International Missions office in Accra and is used to support the

church's international missionary efforts. This is both a "spiritual" and monetary remittance: CoP's transnational social space facilitates the flow of money from the local level up to the international headquarters, increasing the church's capacity for international mission and evangelism.

*Flows of beliefs and practices:*

Theological ideas that impact church practices also flow across national borders, through forms of religious media (books, videos, websites, and social media) and systematic communication. Members are linked to a larger Pentecostal community: a transnational network that extends beyond the confines of Ghana, the United States, or any one national context. Church members continue to live "within and between multiple spatial-temporalities" (Daswani 2015, 195). This has led to both continuity and discontinuity in religious beliefs and practices in the past decade. As Peggy Levitt indicates, the "hybridized or creolized religious beliefs and practices that the migration experience gives rise to emerge where local and global religious influences converge. Global religious institutions shape the transnational migration experience at the same time that migrants chip away at and recreate global religions by making them local and then starting the process anew" (2003, 849).

For example, the core value of holiness in the CoP has traditionally been evidenced through practices such as gender separate seating in the church and the wearing of head coverings and skirts by women (Nyamaah and Nsiah 2013). However, these practices seemed out of place in many congregations located in new (Western) contexts, leading to questions around the relationship of culture and practice. Ultimately, the CoP headquarters issued a controversial communiqué in 2010 that annulled these longstanding traditions, stating that the decisions were made to "retain the Church's growing youth and adult membership as well as open the Church's doors to people of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to have unhindered access to the total gospel in its churches worldwide," recognizing the "present culturally divergent nature of the Church and its mandate to disciple people of all nations and cultures" (Onyinah 2010). Therefore, the existence of a transnational community due to international church growth has contributed to both continuity (to the church's core doctrines) and discontinuity in what the church deems culturally-specific beliefs and practices that may deter the church's international mission.

The transnational activities of immigrant congregations serve to “systematically insert them into a global religious landscape” (Gerloff 2009, 12). Participation in a global religion with international connections can also contribute to the creation of “universal identities” among migrants who belong to global religions (Levitt 2003, 848). Many CoP congregants espouse a universal Christian, Pentecostal identity, in addition to their other primary identities. When migrating, CoP members often take their church membership cards as a means of introduction and incorporate into a new context. These cards serve as identifiers: as members of the CoP, they are part of a transnational organization that transcends geographical boundaries. Therefore, although CoP members in the United States do sometimes recognize their role as *African* Christians (particularly their contribution to overcome what they see as rampant secularization and a loss of Christian spirituality in the United States), the primary distinction in evangelization and mission has less to do with demarcations of national identity and more about distinctions between the “saved” and the “unsaved” (Glick Schiller 2008, 22). Thus, members often emphasize Christian universalism over ethnic particularism.

Therefore, a transnational optic helps us perceive how the CoP facilitates unidirectional mission: as diaspora churches grow in various cities worldwide, they are also part of a larger transnational religious community. This illuminates how Western cities, in a global context, should be viewed in relationship not only with economically “important” cities but also with African cities (Gornik 2011). This brings African cities like Accra—the site of the Church of Pentecost international headquarters—into a central, rather than peripheral, place in our understanding of global mission. The CoP community acts as a bridge between distant places, a coming together of the local and global that contributes to the self-understanding of the church’s international mission and contribution to global evangelism. Mission is not static or place-bound, but rather occurs within a dynamic and shifting network of beliefs and practices that are both affected by—and influence—the migration process.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The rise of migrant-led churches in the West over the last three decades raises questions about the agency of Christian migrants in American cities. These examples from the Church of Pentecost reveal important aspects of migrant-shaped mission that demonstrate migrant agency that transcends borders. Mission

is inherently tied to the everyday lives of migrants who participate in transnational religious organizations. As Christian migrants move, they are not only taking their faith with them; they are also following transnational ties as they participate in mission (Martinez 2013, 206). This calls missiologists to recognize ways in which the social, cultural, and religious significance of African Christianity is not limited to the African continent. It also calls into question missiological studies and strategies rooted in methodological nationalism: fixated on regional categorization and bounded concepts of culture that fail to see how African Christianity might have a significant or lasting impact on cities in the West.

Secondly, immigrant congregations and lives do not fit within the traditional understanding of mission as something initiated “from here” and then performed “over there.” This is not a to/from, territorial understanding of mission. Rather, it is multidirectional and often happens distinct from the strategic initiatives of the trained professionals. A cross-border perspective on mission is a salient aspect of the Christian migrant experience and requires moving beyond Western models and understandings of mission in the “doing” of mission, the “theorizing” of mission, and the “theologizing” of mission. It requires a posture that “seeks to re-learn mission from the churches of the South, particularly African-led churches” (Omenyo 2013, 66).

Third, it demonstrates the agency of Christian migrants as participants with a global vision of outreach. The mission of African immigrant Christians should not be ignored, even in the face of limited—albeit growing—success in reaching “native” Western populations. Kwame Bediako determined that the “international” self-definition of many African-led churches should be respected because their vision and mission is clearly global (2000, 311). Although mission may not have been the primary reason for migration, it acquires a central place in the mind of many diaspora Christians of the Church of Pentecost who see themselves as Christians with a global mission: evangelists and missionaries called to share the gospel to the ends of the earth (Asamoah-Gyadu 2011, 98). This leads to the charting of new identities and self-understanding within a global framework, what Afe Adogame calls the “global self-assertion” of churches like the Church of Pentecost that represent actual global structures (2013, 151).

However, this emphasis on the globalization and internationalization of African-led churches should not lead to the dismissal of the agency of African

Christian migrants in the local, often urban, contexts in which they live and work. Just as African Christianity has grown (and continues to grow) due to the efforts of millions of local Christians who engage in evangelism on a regular basis, so is the witness of African Christians in the West changing the face of American Christianity. This is less the mission of a few, professional specialists. It is rather primarily what Mark Gornik calls mission “as a way of life” (2011), what Jehu J. Hanciles refers to as a “witness as witness,” (2008, 365) and what J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu calls “witness of presence” (2013, 10). Therefore, rather than measuring the success of African migrant mission through their ability (or lack thereof) to incorporate non-Africans into their diaspora congregations, we should rather understand that “mission primarily takes place where people are”—as they witness to the goodness of a global God at work, school, and in everyday life.

The narrative that emerges is of mission inherently intertwined with migration. As African-led churches with a deep commitment to mission and evangelism cross national and ethnic boundaries, they are contributing to transnational witness through active church planting and in their everyday lives. Therefore, rather than assuming American cities are “unreached” spiritual deserts we must strive to understand the missionary impact of Christian migrants within these contexts, seeking to better know how migrants and their descendants bring the gospel of Christ to bear on the needs and realities of life in new (urban) contexts.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anonymous

2000 “God’s first covenant promises with the Church of Pentecost.” In *The Church of Pentecost Songs*, edited by Johnson Agyemang Baduh, Accra: Pentecost Press. 149-151.

2013 “Population Facts.” edited by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division.

2015a *2015 National Council Meeting Report*. Elizabeth, New Jersey: The Church of Pentecost USA, Inc.

2015b America’s changing religious landscape. Pew Research Center.

Adogame, Afe

2009 “Transnational Migration and Pentecostalism In Europe.” GloPent: Transnational Pentecostalism in Europe, University of Birmingham.

Adogame, Afe

2013 *The African Christian diaspora: New currents and emerging trends in world Christianity*. London: Bloomsbury.

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena

2011 “On Mission Abroad”: Ghana’s Church of Pentecost and its USA Missions.” In *African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe*, edited by Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. 89-103.

2013 “Prayer, power and empowerment: Migration and Diaspora Mission.” Hendrik Kraemer Lecture, Amsterdam.

Afshom, Julie, and Sarah Becker

2011 “Building Bridges in the Name of God.” In *Unravelling migrants as transnational agents of development: social spaces in between Ghana and Germany*, edited by Thomas Faist and Nadine Sieveking, Berlin: Global. 145-186.

Bediako, Kwame

2000 "African and Christianity on the threshold of the of the third millennium: the religious dimension." *African Affairs* 99.

Biney, Moses Ohene

2005 "Singing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land: A Socio-Ethical Study of a Ghanaian Immigrant Church in New York." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Boccagni, Paulo

2012 "Even a transnational social field must have its boundaries: methodological options, potentials and dilemmas for researching transnationalism." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, edited by Carlos Vargas-Silva, 295-318. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Bongmba, Elias K

2007 "Portable Faith: The Global Mission of African Initiated Churches (AICs)." In *African Immigrant Religions in America*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani. New York and London: New York University Press.

Bredwa-Mensah, Yaw

2004 "The Church of Pentecost in retrospect: 1937-1960." The Church of Pentecost 50 years of sustainable growth: James McKeown Memorial Lectures, Accra.

Casiño, Tereso C., Gary Fujino, and Timothy R. Sisk

2012 *Reaching the city : reflections on urban mission for the twenty-first century*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Castles, Stephen, and Mark J. Miller

2009 *The age of migration : international population movements in the modern world*. 4th ed. New York: Guilford Press.

Cronshaw, Darren, and Steve Taylor

2014 "The congregation in a pluralist society: Rereading Newbigin for missional churches today." *Pacifica* 27 (2): 206-228.

Daswani, Girish.

2015 *Looking back, moving forward: transformation and ethnical practice in the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

- Ebaugh, Helen Rose Fuchs, and Janet Saltzman Chafetz  
 2002 *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Faist, Thomas  
 2000 *The volume and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.
- Foley, Michael W., and Dean R. Hoge  
 2007 *Religion and the New Immigrations: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fortuny-Loret de Mola, Patricia  
 2002 "The Santa Cena of the Luz Del Mundo Church: A Case of Contemporary Transnationalism." In *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Immigrant Networks*, edited by Janet Saltzman Chafetz and Helen Rose Ebaugh, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. 15-50.
- Gerloff, Roswith  
 2009 "The African Diaspora and the Shaping of Christianity in Africa: Perspectives on Religion, Migration, Identity and Collaboration." *Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) and Partners in Africa*.
- Glick Schiller, Nina  
 2008 "Beyond methodological ethnicity: local and transnational pathways of immigrant incorporation." *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, Sweden.
- Gornik, Mark R  
 2011 *Word made global: stories of African Christianity in New York City*. Kindle ed. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.
- Greenway, Roger S., and Timothy M. Monsma  
 2000 *Cities: Missions' new frontier*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Guest, Kenneth J.

- 2003 *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community*. New York: New York University Press.

Hanciles, Jehu

- 2008 *Beyond christendom : globalization, African migration, and the transformation of the West*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

Herppich, Birgit

- 2011 "Immigrant Communities in America - Objects of Mission or Missional Agents? The Case of the Church of Pentecost (Ghana) in Urban America." 2011 National Evangelical Missiological Society Meeting, Scottsdale, Arizona.

Kivisto, Peter

- 2014 *Religion and immigration: Migrant faiths in North America and Western Europe, Immigration & Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Koser, Khalid.

- 2007 *International migration: a very short introduction, Very short introductions*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Krause, Kristine

- 2008 "Spiritual Spaces in Post-Industrial Places: Transnational Churches in North East London." *In Transnational Ties: Cities, Migrations, and Identities*, edited by Michael Peter Smith and John Eade. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Larbi, E. Kingsley

- 2004 "The Church of Pentecost: Sustaining growth." James McKeown Memorial Lectures, Accra, Ghana.

Levitt, Peggy

- 2003 "You Know, Abraham was really the first immigrant": Religion and transnational migration." *The International Migration Review* 37 (3):847-873.

- 2007 *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York: New Press.

- Levitt, Peggy, and B. Nadya Jaworsky  
 2007 "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33:129-156.
- Martinez, Juan Francisco  
 2013 "Remittances and mission: Transnational Latino Pentecostal Ministry in Los Angeles." In *Spirit and power: the growth and global impact of Pentecostalism*, edited by Donald E. Miller, Kimon H. Sargaent and Richard Flory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morawska, Ewa  
 2009 *A Sociology of Immigration: (Re)Making Multifaceted America*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Murphy, Caryle  
 2015 "Growing share of U.S. immigrants have no religious affiliation." Pew Research Center Accessed June 3.  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/19/growing-share-of-u-s-immigrants-have-no-religious-affiliation/>.
- Newbiggin, Lesslie  
 1989 *The Gospel in a pluralist society*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans.
- Nyamaah, Emmanuel, and Alice Matilda Nsiah  
 2013 "Christianity and culture in Ghana: a study of the Church of Pentecost's decree on head covering and 1 Corinthians 11:2-16." 1st Annual International Interdisciplinary Conference, AIIC, Azores Islands, Portugal.
- Olupona, Jacob K., and Regina Gemignani  
 2007 "Introduction." In *African Immigrant Religions in America*, edited by Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani, 1-26. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Omenyo, Cephas N.  
 2013 "Trans-national protestant missions: The Ghanaian story." *Swedish Missiological Themes* 101 (1):41-66.
- Onyinah, Opoku  
 2004 "Pentecostalism and the African Diaspora: An Examination of the Missions Activities of the Church of Pentecost." *Pneuma* 26 (2):216-241.

2010 “Communique Issued by Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists of the Church of Pentecost at the end of their annual prayer meetings held at the Pentecost Pension Guest House.” Edited by Church of Pentecost. Accra: Church of Pentecost General Headquarters.

Payne, Jervis David

2012 *Strangers next door : immigration, migration, and mission*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books.

Sunquist, Scott

2013 *Understanding Christian mission : participation in suffering and glory*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Takyi, Baffour K., and Kwame Safo Boate

2006 “Location and settlement patterns of African immigrants in the U.S.: Demographic and spatial context.” In *The new African diaspora in North America: trends, community building, and adaptation*, edited by Kwado Konadu-Agyemang, Baffour K. Takyi and John A. Arthur. Oxford: Lexington Books.

Währisch-Oblau, Claudia

2009 *The missionary self-perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic church leaders from the global South in Europe: bringing back the Gospel*. Leiden ; Boston: Brill.

Warner, R. Stephen

2000 “Religion and New (Post-1965) Immigrants: Some Principles Drawn from Field Research.” *American Studies* 41 (3).

Wilson, Jill H., and Nicole Prchal Svajlenka

2014 “Immigrants continue to disperse, with fastest growth in the suburbs.” Brookings Accessed June 3. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/10/29-immigrants-disperse-suburbs-wilson-svajlenka>.

Zong, Jie, and Jeanne Batlova

2015 “Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States.” Migration Policy Institute Accessed March 12. <http://migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>.

