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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.38140/
at.v44i1.7866](https://doi.org/10.38140/at.v44i1.7866)

ISSN: 1015-8758 (Print)

ISSN: 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2024
44(1):51-70

Date received:
11 January 2024

Date accepted:
22 April 2024

Date published:
28 June 2024



Published by the UFS
<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

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Mission to the wounded youth: Scripture Union's evangelistic approaches in senior high school in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana

ABSTRACT

The article forms part of a broader research project that investigated Scripture Union's (SU) missional responses to the wounded youth. It discusses SU's evangelistic response to the youth in the senior high schools in Kumasi through their campus ministry. The article seeks to answer the following question: What evangelistic strategies are used by Scripture Union in responding to the needs of the senior high school (SHS) students in Kumasi? Empirical data were collected through SU's institutional records, interviews, and participant observations to investigate how SU addresses the spiritual, physical, and social challenges of SHS students through evangelism. The study found that SU blended traditional evangelistic approaches with media engagement, leveraged adult media literacy for youth interests, used fun activities for gospel outreach, and involved youth in campus evangelism in its campus ministry.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is done in the context of students in need of missiological interventions. The premise is that “mission always proceeds in settings characterised by woundedness” through which God restores a “broken sinful world ... to what [he] always intended for the world” (Kollman 2022:140; Bosch 2011:548; Barrett *et al.* 2004:x). The phrase “wounded youth”,

carved from the 2020 conference theme for the International Association of Mission Studies' (IAMS) "Powers, inequalities, and vulnerabilities: Mission in a wounded world" (Hintersteiner 2022:135-138), is specifically used in this work to refer to youths aged 15 to 19 years who are faced with several challenges. The current challenge of the youth is the effect of worldwide crises arising from "the reality of evil in human beings and the structures of society" (Bosch 2011:370), trickling down to individual nations. Bosch (2011:369) observes:

The dream of a unified world in which all would enjoy peace, liberty, and justice has turned into a nightmare of conflict, bondage, and injustice. The disappointment is so fundamental and pervasive that it cannot possibly be ignored or suppressed.

In the Ghanaian context, these challenges include the growing incidence of youth involved in violent conflicts, increasing juvenile crime, a high incidence of drug and substance abuse, as well as inadequate mentoring opportunities, which lead to poor moral, social, cultural, and religious values. Other challenges include high vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections (STIs and STDs), peer pressure, and a get-rich-quick attitude (Ghana Ministry of Youth and Sports 2010:7). The chilling details of how two teenagers murdered a ten-year-old at Kasoa in the central region of Ghana with the intention of getting money from rituals and the murder of a 17-year-old first-year student of the Konongo Odumase SHS in the Ashanti region of Ghana (where the study is done) hint at the depth of woundedness of the youth with respect to the get-rich-quick attitude and campus-based violence, respectively (Myjoyonline 2021; Modernghana 2021). Some influential factors that deepen the wounds of youths are access to online resources and peer influence when they turn negative. It is argued that the youth of Ghana are wounded and in need of a missional response (Hintersteiner 2022:135).

Civil societies, churches, parachurch groups, and educational authorities have responded to these forms of woundedness in several ways. Even though missions to the youth in Ghana have taken place across the various levels of education, scholars have not given much attention to the parachurch campus ministry at the SHS level. For instance, Adubofour (1994:ii) emphasizes the historical account of the SU in Ghana. Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2011:2) concentrates on the operations of the Scripture Union Prayer Warrior Ministry (SUPWM). White (2014:212) identifies the literature gap that existed as far as approaches to missions are concerned, but concentrates on the approach used by Pentecostal churches. Kudzodzi (2017:ix) investigates the structure and activities of Christian campus ministries, but focuses on Ghanaian tertiary-level institutions, with special reference to the National Union of Baptist Students (NUBS) at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).

Considering the above, this article investigates the campus ministry and mission approaches of the SU, Ghana, with a special focus on the youth in senior high schools (SHSs) in the Kumasi Metropolis. The study serves as a self-check for SU and other faith-based groups involved in campus ministry in Ghana. The SU, Ghana, is an evangelical, autonomous, interdenominational Christian organisation that started as a school and Bible study movement in schools in Ghana in the early 1950s. This organisation has contributed immensely to the course of mission to the youth (Kuwornu-Adjaottor 2011:3).

The article forms part of a bigger research project with ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University (Project number: 24018, February 2022). However, this article focuses on the evangelistic component of SU's missional responses to the wounded youth, seeking to answer the following question: What evangelistic approaches are being used by Scripture Union, Ghana as a response to the concerns of the youth in the various SHSs in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana?

The article starts with a broader definition of evangelism and narrows down to youth and evangelism. The discussion on evangelism is to establish the conceptual and theological perspective of the study. This is followed by the research methodology, the findings, and an evaluation of the study. The findings are presented according to the themes derived from the empirical data.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELISM

Etymologically, “evangelism” derives from the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* (*euaggelion*), meaning “gospel” or “good news” (Frees 2020:70; Moreau 2000:341). The Greek word *ευαγγελιζέσται* (*euaggelizesthai*), which is derived from *εὐαγγέλιον* (*euaggelion*), describes the act of presenting the “good news”. It means to “announce” or “bring good news” (Frees 2020:70).

This article uses Bosch's (2011:422) definition of evangelism. It is taken to mean the act of

announcing that God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Lord of history, Savior and Liberator.

This definition is used in this article because the mention of “Savior and Liberator” hints at what makes the gospel message “good news” and portrays evangelism as a potent response to the wounded youth. Considering the above, evangelising the youth is a Christian practice during which individuals

or groups share the “good news” about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as their contribution to God’s mission, with a specific focus on the youth (White & Aikins 2021:263-283; Freeks 2020:70; Gnanakan 2008:3).

Evangelism takes several forms and does not only refer to the verbal declaration of the “good news”. Gnanakan’s (2008:3) understanding of evangelism as “proclamation”, portraying it as a formal public declaration of an important message by a messenger, gives room to other forms of evangelism apart from verbal. Both Bosch (2011:428-430) and Gnanakan (2008:3) agree that evangelism can have both verbal and written forms. The verbal form is preaching sermons. The distribution of Bibles, gospel tracts, and other Christian literature are examples of the written forms of the proclamation of the gospel.

It should also be noted that evangelism is a fundamental component of the Christian church’s mission and encompasses the communication of God’s actions throughout history, in the present and for the future (Bosch 2011:422; Bevans & Schroeder 2004:7). Although it is narrower than mission, Freeks (2020:70) observes that “evangelism” and “mission” (or the “mission of God”) are used interchangeably. In Wright’s (2012:7-8) view, evangelism should rather be viewed as central to the Christian mission. He likens the relationship between evangelism and the other components of mission to that of the hub and the wheel of a vehicle. The hub represents evangelism, and the wheel represents the other components of mission. He explains further that, since the good news is God’s redemption plan in Jesus for the whole of creation, none of them (the hub or the wheel) should be deemed more important than the other. That is, there is good news in Jesus about creation, justice, compassion, and discipleship. In demonstrating any of these, we preach Christ and His love. Thus, evangelism is not mission itself nor should it be rated above the other components of mission in its practice. It should rather be viewed as central to all our missionary efforts. Stated otherwise, evangelism must integrate other components of mission.

Further to the above discussions, since technology has opened the floodgates for youths to be exposed to all forms of positive and negative allurements through the media landscape, it is also imperative for youth ministers to adopt proactive measures. Exploring innovative approaches that harness this exposure aims to facilitate a healing process, helping youths overcome their wounds. Effective evangelistic approaches to the youth are also expected to produce youths who have a relationship with God, remain in the church, and get involved in activities that prepare them to be Christ-like. Through exciting activities, unbelieving youth can be presented with the gospel. However, in Moser and Nel’s (2019:5) view, youth evangelistic approaches that focus on what attracts contemporary unbelieving youth, at

the expense of Christian identity and character formation (discipleship), do not produce youth who remain in the church. They argue that, in an attempt to appeal to the unchurched youth and attract new members to youth groups, some youth ministry practitioners, through fun and entertainment, attempt to meet culturally acceptable standards. In such situations, priority is given to what the youth of a particular area like rather than what Christlikeness ought to be. Consequently, since Christian identity is not the focus and evangelism is not viewed as “transformative discipleship” (Jukko & Keum 2019:ix),

we are not only failing to keep our youth in the church but also failing to promote effectively who we are (Moser & Nel 2019:5).

Moser & Nel (2019:4-5) further submit that

youth evangelistic activities should be relevant, attractive, and bring them to a setting where they can hear a Christian message and pursue spiritual maturity that enhances their retention in church.

The bottom line is that what is used to attract the youth in our evangelistic endeavours must be thoroughly considered and measured against the goal of evangelism.

3. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study uses the phenomenological approach to data gathering. Fraenkel and Norman (2000:12) intimate that, in qualitative research, the researcher obtains a more holistic picture of what goes on in a particular situation or setting. Although quantitative data is easier to collect, more objective, and can be easily exposed to statistical analysis and extrapolation, qualitative data was preferred in this study for its in-depth nature. The researchers sought data on thoughts and lived experiences that could not be reduced to numerical forms (Hopkins *et al.* 2017:20-21). The case study, as an exploratory design, was used to gain deeper insight into SU's SHS campus ministry activities. An additional justification is that hardly any studies have been done regarding SU activities in Ghana after its existence since 1890 and its operation as the largest Christian parachurch community of faith (Akhtar 2016:73).

The researchers adopted a multi-method approach encompassing interviews, participant observation, and scrutiny of institutional documents for empirical data gathering (Gillman 2000:13; Lester 1999:1). The researchers used participant observation because it affords them the opportunity to obtain first-hand insights and information that would otherwise have been unavailable to other researchers. To ensure the authenticity of first-hand information, there

was constant engagement with SU's staff and official institutional documents to validate the observations made. This triangulation facilitated data verification, which enhanced the overall reliability and validity of the study.

Ten participants were contacted for the data collection for the study. Seven of the participants were purposively selected, while three were contacted through the snowball approach. The people interviewed included the regional manager, the area programmes officer for Kumasi, and the immediate past national manager for schools and camps. Secondary data was also gathered through online resources and credible newspapers.

Data gathered through interviews were transcribed and presented according to the themes that emerged from the responses. It was then thematically analysed in light of the research question.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the following sections, the researchers identify and discuss SU's evangelistic approaches that seek to respond to the wounds of the SHS students in their campus ministry in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The following themes emerged from the responses in the interviews: training sessions for students, tract distribution, and the delivery of gospel sermons. The other themes include the use of fun activities, personal testimonies of luminaries, and contemporary media. Related SU documents were consulted in discussing the themes that were generated during the interviews. The regional manager and the area programmes officer were also available for follow-up discussions. The data from the interviews is italicised in the research findings and thematic discussions below.

4.1 Evangelistic training

Training is very important in every sphere of life. It gives people the required skills, knowledge, and tools for effective output. SU encourages its staff and students in campus groups to participate in evangelism. For this reason, during camps and campus missions, the SU undertakes evangelistic training for student Christian leaders to hone their skills in personal evangelism and inspire their participation therein. For Bryant (2005:5), evangelicals work to combine the mind and the spirit so that students understand and experience their faith. This understanding and personal experience produce an intrinsic motivation that results in students' search for opportunities to participate in faith practices such as evangelism. Students' participation in campus evangelism is viewed as their obligation to contribute to soul-winning and the making of disciples of Christ (Caro 2017:iii). The regional manager explained that

the leaders of the SU's school group fellowships and other denominations are trained before campus missions in areas such as personal witnessing (Antwi 2022).

According to the former national manager for schools and camps,

The Nuru Allam¹ supplies literature materials in the form of tracts that aid in the evangelistic training (Boakye 2022).

Students are, therefore, coached to share their experience in Christ through witnessing to their colleagues in the classroom, dormitories, and other places in the school. However, it was discovered during the research that SU has no official monitoring and evaluation system to review the effectiveness of the evangelistic training.

4.2 Evangelism through tract distribution

Evangelism tracts are brief and straightforward presentations of the gospel message that are produced in handy, pocket-size formats and are intended to be tossed, slipped, and flipped to others (White & Niemandt 2015:223; Berger & Hochstedler 2002).

As part of SU's evangelism approaches in the SHSs, "*students and missionaries share evangelism tracts during campus missions*" (Akuoko 2022). This approach is mainly well-received by students, but not without incidents in which tracts are rejected. During the 2022 missions in Kumasi Girls' SHS, I, as a participant observer, noted the mixed responses from students.

Tract distribution on campus comes with some expected advantages. First, it capitalises on students' capacity to read, comprehend, and interpret written material. Ugwu and Chukwuma (2021:6) also observe that this approach to evangelism is an opportunity to address students' challenges such as cultism on campus. They further note that the use of the tracts gives student evangelists the platform to share the gospel with their institutions' staff. It is also an opportunity to share the gospel with the students and staff who cannot stay for the verbal preaching of the gospel due to time constraints. In a campus situation, where students can be readily accessed, tract distribution can be an easy way of evangelising with the prospects of students encountering the gospel.

Despite these advantages, Moon (2011:14) is sceptical regarding its effectiveness. To her, it is uncommon for people who have never heard the gospel to read gospel tracts and get converted. She cautions, however, that in their use tracts should be sensitive to the culture of the people who are

1 Formerly, distribution of Christian literature.

expected to receive them. Considering this, additional steps must be taken in its use. This includes recognising the cultural and faith diversity of students in the school; using relatable and understandable language, and crafting messages that resonate with their experiences and challenges. There should also be a mechanism to evaluate its impact. This can be done by tracking the number of tracts distributed or instituting a feedback system. Ugwu and Chukwuma (2021:6) suggest that telephone numbers should be provided on the tracts so that recipients can call for clarification and further assistance. As a feedback mechanism, the telephone numbers should not only be those of the producers of the tracts, but also those of the local distributors, possibly including student group patrons on campus.

4.3 Gospel proclamation through preaching

The gospel is also expected to be verbally proclaimed through preaching. It infers the verbal public announcement about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (White & Aikins 2021:263-283; Gnanakan 2008:3).

As part of SU's campus ministry programme, there is occasionally the opportunity to collaborate with school authorities and present the gospel over some days consecutively. Such preaching opportunities involve a whole school or simply a cohort such as first-year students. SU refers to this as "first years' crusade".

SU refers to the presentation of the gospel during mission programmes, rallies, camps, and conferences as the "main talk", connoting a projection of the evangelism component of missions over and above the others. However, in discussing holistic missions, Wright (2012:7-8) disagrees with any attempt to project one aspect of the mission approach over the other, arguing that evangelism is as important as social action and vice versa. He prefers a "centrality" of evangelism.

In considering the content of the preaching programme, one interviewee opines that "*SU is particularly careful about the content of the gospel messages preached, which informs the selection of speakers*" (Antwi 2022). Akuoko Adomako and Adu Boakye (the immediate past national manager for schools and camps, both mentioned that

every three-day SU mission programme is expected to address at least three issues: (a) God's love for man; (b) the fall of man (the problem of sin) (c) the restoration of man (God's salvation plan /eternal hope) (Boakye 2022; Akuoko 2022).

By being particular about what is preached, the SU ensures that the content, which Bosch (2011:422) mentions as the announcement of God's intervention on behalf of humankind, and the outcomes of the gospel remain the same, even though the contexts change. This is necessary to keep SU's evangelical ethos and to meet the salvation needs of the students in all programmes. Niringiye (2008:11) points out that the content of the salvation message presented on any occasion is as important as considering and obeying the task of presenting it, and that a gospel message should point to Jesus. In SU's ministry, the theme that dominated most of the campus missions during the data collection year (2022) was "Come walk with Jesus" (Mark 1:16-18); and "Jesus, the true love" (Rom. 5:8). Niringiye (2008:15) posits that the centrality of the person of Jesus "in whom and through whom the Kingdom of God becomes a reality" is key to the proclamation of the gospel.

4.4 Evangelism through youthful fun activities

Nowadays, youth love to have fun, and missionaries must choose missional approaches that get their attention and make the gospel meaningful to them. Aziz (2019:1) observes that, historically, youth ministries tended to prescribe how to engage with young people and their culture by relying on outdated concepts and models rather than by observing and understanding their ever-evolving world and their "lived realities and experiences". He proposes a shift from a prescriptive approach to a descriptive one. One of SU's camps is driven by this notion. It is dubbed Lifebuild Camp and is wrapped in youthful fun. This programme is organised exclusively for SHS students in Kumasi. It is purposely designed to capture the attention of youth, by exposing them to a carefully measured and monitored amount of youthful fun. Kyere (2022), a member of the mission team, notes "*The youth of today love to have fun*". In the 2016 Lifebuild camp at Yaa Asantewaa SHS, participants were to expect nothing less than good food, great fun, a healthy friendship, meeting mature and friendly camp officers eager to serve them, and educative time with mentors through counselling. The lessons were expected to be non-formal, Bible-based, and value-based, to help participants develop healthy core values (Scripture Union Lifebuild Camp flier 2016).

The activities included peer education, an exciting time at Lakeside Resort, photography, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, and other games. Other activities were "Shabbach hour", which was the music, drama, and choreography session; "primetime", prayers, and personal reflection. In the 2014 edition of the same programme, the theme was entitled: WWJD? (What would Jesus do?). The coding of some of the topics, the nature of the theme, and the colourful design of the flier were all strategies to arouse the curiosity and interest of the youth.

Kyere, the Area Programmes Officer of Mampong and a former Administrative Assistant of Kumasi Area, submits that:

Some students sometimes come to the fellowship because of their need for fun and 'enjoyment'. But it later ends with their encounter with Christ. They have an agenda, but we have a different and higher agenda; we just create what they like, and we give them the word of God (Kyere 2022:).

He also explains that *"SU's programmes that target SHS students are appealing. And organizers use jargons that appeal to the youth"*. In my view, this approach is a befitting application of Bagget's (2002:58) view when he proposes, for the parachurch ministry, an engagement with the "rationalized, secular world" to the point of re-enchanting and re-"framing" the current status quo. The gospel, therefore, needs contextualisation. This may possibly trigger a desire in the youth to start a journey with Christ.

Despite the excitement such programmes elicit, there is a temptation to be relevant to the youth and lose focus on the world of Christians. The notion that Christians are in the world and not of it (John 15:19; 17:16; 14:2) strikes a biblical caution to the extent this approach can go. Cloete (2015:1) raises this caution when she mentions that the church, in its participation in the mission of "an active God in the world", should not organise activities that are compromised to the extent of reducing the missionary activity to mere entertainment. The ultimate desired impact of the missionary endeavour will thus be lost. The challenge is how "to pursue the missionary task with absolute fidelity to the truth of the Holy Bible" (SU, Ghana 2016:73).

4.5 Evangelism through personal testimonies

Throughout the Bible, there have been instances in which the personal lives and testimonies of some people have inspired others to have salvation experiences. The Samaritan woman at the well, who became a believer, went to the town to testify about Jesus (John 4:1-42). Sharing the testimony of his sight, a blind man influenced many to follow Jesus (John 9:1-41). Similar occurrences include Paul's conversion story (Acts 19:1-19; Gal. 1:11-24), and Philip's witness to Nathaniel, who became a disciple of Jesus. When Philip found Nathanael, he told him:

We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (John 1:45).

In this section, the researchers explore how SU uses personal testimonies in its campus ministry.

Sometimes, SU presents certain luminaries in its missional response to the wounded youth to share their stories and serve as models. This approach to evangelism is somehow effective because Bandura's (1977) social learning theory shows that the youth look up to adults in their environments to formulate diverse behaviour, some of which ultimately influence the general society in which they live. Thus, the youth observe the behaviour of adults who are presented to them by the social structures, desire to be like them, and participate in what they do. Gleaning from Paul's words "so that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me ..." (Gal. 2:20), Ogunewu (2014:85) argues that Christians who set examples with their lives promote God's message to those who encounter them. This, together with Bandura's social learning theory can play to the advantage of this approach to campus evangelism.

Apart from the role played by camp officers as models and mentors at camps, SU, through its campus ministry in Kumasi, engages patrons and patronesses, as well as former school group fellowship members in their campus missions. Other high-profile academics are engaged to inspire students to seek Jesus, face their challenges with him, and live just as he did. Through their presentations, they narrate the challenges of their time as students, their personal experiences, and how they survived. Considering Ogunewu's (2014:85) observation that

[o]ne of the greatest criticisms of the church in recent times is that Christians are often inconsistent, hypocritical, and worldly,

this approach must be carefully used especially in selecting and presenting past students for participating in campus evangelism, lest it yields counterproductive outcomes. The reason for this is that current students are already familiar with past students' behavioural and faith records.

4.6 SU's campus evangelism through contemporary media

Cloete (2017:1) argues for a sober reflection on technology, not only as secular but also its potential to provide sacred spaces. She argues that this is 'the digital age' where "digital media are present in all spheres of life". Moreover, the media serves as a source that can be used as a missional tool in youth ministry. To effectively minister to the contemporary youth, it is imperative for concerned adults to get into their world of media and not presume to know what they are exposed to. It will help us know them "on their own turf" (Borgman 1994:13) and understand their thought patterns better.

SU uses some of the media platforms to which the youths are exposed in its campus ministry. Information from outlets such as social media, video-sharing platforms, video- and music-streaming platforms, and print media is used in a programme dubbed “The world today”. This term is used in the SU Campus Ministry to describe the nature of the world of the youth from contemporary perspectives. This component of SU’s whole-school missions is done using audio-visual materials gathered mainly from media outlets that relate to the youth subculture. For instance, the presenter gives pictorial and video evidence of the ultimate disappointments of students who followed online and billboard advertisements with the hope of getting rich quickly or those who sought some supernatural powers to attract students of the opposite sex to engage in pre-marital sexual affairs.² First, the baits are presented, and then the aftermath. The import is that students who watch the allurements of occultism, get-rich-quick attitude, and sexual immorality do not watch or take critical notice of the effect of these on them “on their own turf” (Borgman, 1994:13) and on their own campuses with visual and auditory appeals. This presentation is wrapped with a critical engagement of Christian principles and standards.

5. AN EVALUATION OF SU’S CAMPUS EVANGELISTIC APPROACHES

In the previous section, The researchers identified and discussed SU’s campus ministry approaches. In the following section, they evaluate the group’s evangelistic activities in light of the conceptual and theological understanding of contemporary youth evangelism.

5.1 A ‘soteriological motif’ of mission

In SU’s campus ministry, there is a blurred line between evangelism and mission in their usage, although evangelism is a much older term in theological verbiage (Bosch 2011:419). SU’s approach to evangelism resonates with Bosch’s “mission as mediating salvation” (Bosch 2011:402). In this model, Christian missionary movements focus on the presentation of the message of salvation to all, in expectation of salvation experiences by recipients. Bosch further observes that, in this approach, to divulge God’s involvement in

2 The term commonly used for that kind of power is ‘for girls’, which means boys seeking supernatural powers to win girls to themselves. Other students such as Denzel, a former student of an SHS in Kumasi, sought powers to interfere with the schools’ administrative decisions regarding student discipline (Youtube.com 23 September 2018, live interview about occultism in Kumasi High School. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hloft8oPZE>) [3 October 2021].

salvation through his provision, all other missionary efforts are viewed only as preparatory grounds for the message of salvation.

In SU's campus ministry, most of the activities (including counselling) are done as conduits for "the real mission" – the preaching of the gospel aimed at a conversion experience. Consequently, SU refers to the evangelistic messages of its campus mission programmes as 'main talk'. This view narrows evangelism only to salvation of the soul without adequate recourse to Jesus' expression of his ministry (Luke 1:18). In a broader sense, it also narrows the whole missionary endeavour to only the evangelistic part of God's mission. The purpose of missionary endeavours such as social action is thus reduced to the creation of an environment for evangelism, not missional responses in their own rights. Consequently, the main criterion for judging the success of campus evangelism is the number of students who respond to altar calls. This general notion of "main talk" needs attention. Campus evangelistic approaches should rather be executed as integral to campus mission, while recognising that the various needs of youths such as their social needs are addressed with the good news.

5.2 Strategic timing in campus evangelism

The timing of campus evangelistic meetings is as important as the content and method used. Ogunewu (2014:85) argues that effective evangelistic approaches should be "tailored to meet the need of the time and that of the environment". There are times of threat and opportunity in the lives of students on campus that can be harnessed for missional gains. We refer to such times as times of heightened vulnerability for first-year students on campus, where vulnerability connotes "existing woundedness as well as the potential for new woundedness" (Kollman 2022:151). These include times of new admissions when students make choices such as faith associations and friends.

The timing of SU's "first years' crusade" is expected to be both interventional and preventive. First, new students who are already facing several youth challenges prior to SHS education are afforded the opportunity to encounter God in their first year at the school. This can offer them the ability to overcome their challenges. Furthermore, the motive for organising SU's "first years' crusade" ties with Jukko and Keum's (2019:8) observation that

[i]n some ways, the issues that trouble us are not new, but there is a sense that matters are escalating and there is need for new urgency in addressing them.

Secondly, in a campus situation, timely evangelistic programmes can also serve as preventive therapy for students who are already in the Christian faith. During such times, evangelistic missions on campus help reinforce the faith

of new students and strengthen that of continuing ones who are already in the Christian faith. This prevents possible church disaffiliation, which research has found to occur most often in the teenage years and early 20s (O'Connor *et al.* 2020:723; Roozen 1980:429). Times of new admissions are also times during which new students choose their friends. They thus stand the chance of making the right choices if they find or anchor their faith in Jesus. The impact of campus evangelism in relation to this could be improved if it is well-timed. This thought finds expression in Kollman's reflection on the triage system in medical verbiage. To him, there is a need for missiological prophylaxis which aims at mission-minded efforts "to prevent wounding in the future" (Kollman 2022:148).

Missionaries and missiologists may struggle to discern what God wants to do and at which time he wants to spark a move on a particular campus, but they can read the moments of emotional, physical, and social vulnerabilities of students and plan appropriately. In this way, they plan strategically, trusting that, as Peterson (1993:60) notes,

God has been working diligently, redemptively, and strategically before
I appeared on the scene, before I was aware there was something here
for me to do.

Hintersteiner (2022:136) notes that "mission has, at times, exploited and increased the vulnerabilities of people". However, in the context discussed earlier, if mission is strategically timed, it will exploit student vulnerability and rather serve as an interventional or preventive therapy for students on campus.

5.3 Media advantage in youth evangelism

Contemporary evangelistic approaches cannot be done without critically considering possible sources of their wounds and designing strategies that inspire a liberation from them. Evangelism must be need-based. The youths of Kumasi have increasing access to the worldwide web, through which they access a wide range of materials.

The data gathered in the study indicates that, within its campus ministry, SU strategically leverages information accessed by the youth through diverse media channels, in order to respond to their needs. However, there is a deficit in the presentation of evangelistic messages capable of rivalling and engaging with the online attention of students to a comparable extent. The question is: Why will SU not present the good news to the youth in digital form as well? SU's campus evangelical approaches to SHS students dwell on physical meetings, failing to sustain this approach beyond the borders of the school. White and Niemandt's (2015:256) study of the missional approaches used by Pentecostal churches shows that the advent of information and communication technology benefitted not only the secular world, but also

Christians in evangelism. Taking cognisance of the missional advantage that can be gleaned from online ministry, Asamoah-Gyedu (2007:225) instructs: “Get on the internet!’ says the Lord.” There is an urgent need for SU to respond positively to this call because contemporary youth love to stay online, and SU, the largest parachurch community of faith that concentrates its evangelistic efforts on SHS campus ministry, cannot afford to stay offline. The current track system in Ghana’s SHS education affords occasional accumulated number of weeks in which students are at home. To ensure that students stay in the faith, SU should design innovative online programmes that could engage the youth while at home. This could ensure continuity in its missional efforts.

5.4 Student involvement in campus evangelism

Campus evangelistic activities should aim at igniting the participation of youths in the *missio Dei*. As discussed earlier, SHS students are involved in evangelism activities such as training and tract distribution. This affords them the opportunity to be well-equipped to sustain evangelism on campus and extend it to their home churches. However, students’ expression of understanding and experience of their faith, which is one of the characteristics of evangelicals in college campus ministry (Bryant 2005:5), must not be done at the expense of their academic work or that of others. Students must also be taught, as part of the training schedule, how to redeem the time spent in evangelism. This means that Christian campus mission participants must avoid a situation where there is an attempt to promote evangelism on campuses, but it ends up causing another problem – students not doing well academically. In this study, participants were emphatic that SU campus fellowship members and leaders generally excel in campus leadership and academic work.

6. CONCLUSION

SU presents the gospel to SHS students in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana from several angles. Due to their nature and characteristics as youth, the group uses activities that are expected to be captivating and participatory. The study shows that SU attempts to contextualise the gospel message for the youth. Thus, an attempt is made to use traditional evangelistic approaches such as the verbal proclamation of the gospel and tract sharing, as well as engage their world of media space. Mature adults’ access to what interests the youth through the media helps them respond appropriately to their needs. In the SU’s campus ministry, the youth’s interest in fun activities served as a tool for catching their attention and presenting the gospel to them. The study shows that the youth can be trained to take part in campus evangelism. It is important to note that, in an attempt to address the challenges of the youth by catching them and engaging them in fun-filled activities, extreme care must be taken not to water down the gospel and lose our Christian identity.

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Keywords

Trefwoorde

Mission

Sending

Evangelism

Evangelisasie

Contemporary media

Kontemporêre media