

## AN ONOMASTIC STUDY OF SELECTED CHURCHES IN GHANA

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines names and their meanings of selected charismatic churches in Ghana. The aims are to establish how these names are formed and to identify their naming patterns by closely observing and studying the texts (names) from sign posts and buildings of these places of worship. Through purposive sampling, thirty (30) charismatic church names were selected in the Bosomtwe District of the Ashanti Region. The findings revealed that charismatic church names have peculiar naming patterns just as personal naming patterns. These peculiarities are mirrored in their generic and quasi-generic terms that are used to represent their identity as Christian places of worship. It was also realized that givers of such names picked out specific expressions of their choice to modify these generic and quasi-generic terms. The words/phrases used for modifications were sometimes inventive (coinages), descriptive, commendatory or possessive. All the sampled names focused on two themes – an ecstatic emotionalism and an upward/outward spiritual expansiveness as described by Zelinsky (2002) on African-American religion in the contemporary Cook County. It can therefore be concluded that naming of these places of worship depended critically on the understanding of words/phrases used by these givers of religious names.*

**Key Words:** Onomastics, Charismatic Churches, Frame Semantic

## Introduction

In recent times, one does not have to go far on any major street or neighbourhood in Ghana to see a house of worship. On major business streets, well-laid-out neighbourhoods, dusty and un-tarred roads/paths, new building sites etc. one will find a place of worship all over the places. In fact, they have come to be a part of our existence.

These places of worship are different. They are curiously not the traditional church names with words signifying their denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, Methodist Church, Anglican Communion, Presbyterian Church. These new places of worship derive a lot of strange and interesting names that perhaps match and identify their motive and identity. Interestingly, these fascinating names never fail to catch one's attention. More often than not, they force a smile on the face of the reader and other times, the reader is left in awe wondering how such names were coined or formed due to their eccentric nature.

In Ghana, these houses of worship are described as charismatic churches or more popularly, 'one man churches'. The name, 'charismatic' stems from the word, 'charisma' and according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 8th edition, 'it is the powerful personal quality that some people have to attract and impress other people.' For this reason, it is believed in Ghana that the leaders or originators of these places of worship are individuals known to have charisma or a special gift that enables them to possess such great powers of charm or influence. These gifts grant them a magnetic personality that attracts their congregation and perhaps, also, furnish them with a direct control over the kind of name to use for such places. This sense of personal identity and uniqueness in the names they give

to these churches is the major reason why they draw our attention.

All over the world, names are words that a person or an entity is known by (Goodenough, 1965 cited in Aceto 2002). They are believed to be an essential medium of communication in every part of the world (Fakuade et al, 2015). According to Horlacher (2000), Lawson (2007), Bright (2003), Mohammed & Badejo (2000) as cited in Jauro et al (2013), names are used as labels to identify persons, places or things, and are equally historical witnesses. They go on to affirm that the name of a person may be used to trace his/her family genealogy, culture, language, occupation or town and also communicate particular information to others.

This assertion is backed by several authorities including McConnell-Ginet (2003) who argues that names can reflect gender; Tait (2006) who suggests that names portray religion; Li (1997) and Aceto, (2002) as cited in Joseph (2004) who believe that names reveal ethnicity or culture and nationality. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) as cited in Tan (2001) agree that names also remind people of their sense of self among many others.

Naming is thus seen as a purposeful act and a universal cultural practice that communicates a superfluity of denotative and connotative meanings. This seems to suggest that names are not just given; givers of any name consider the surrounding circumstances before naming a referent (Jauro and Ngasma, 2013). Little wonder Rosenhouse (2002) indicates that 'names usually reveal the many preferences and circumstances surrounding their owners or givers in terms of real life objects, actions, features and beliefs.' These entities, thus, occupy a special position in the vocabulary of any language and they

apply to a wide range of particular objects including proper nouns and common nouns.

According to Downing and Locke (2006), ‘Proper nouns are described as any entity/element that is used to classify a particular group of element. These are nouns that are arbitrary and have no definable meaning in language, that is, they can’t bear any specific characteristics of the entities being referred to.’ They include names of people such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Hillary Clinton; places of worship such as Lovehouse Chapel, Faith Baptist; names of towns/villages/cities such as Winneba, Abuja; names of hospitals such as Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, Enchi Government Hospital; titles of movies such as God’s not Dead, Titanic.

Common nouns, on the other hand, are so called because they are names shared in common by everything of the same class, group or kind (Afreh, 2006). These nouns are usually grouped in terms of their ‘countability’ as coined by Downing and Locke (2006). They can either be count or non-count nouns. This does signify the plurality or otherwise of the element, unlike the proper noun. Examples include books, cars, schools, houses. From the above definitions, the names of places of worship are a good example of proper nouns and can be studied as part of Onomastics.

Onomastics or Onomatology is referred to as the study of names, a field which touches on linguistics, history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, philology and much more; it is significantly important for human existence, especially because people value culture, language and communication. According to Crystal (1999), it is a branch of semantics that studies the etymology of proper names including their form and use. Onomastics can be grouped into three branches or sub-

disciplines – Anthroponomastics (studies personal names), Toponomastics (studies the names of places) and Ethnonyms (deals with the study of names of various ethnic groups). In view of this, the names of places of worship fall under the context of toponomastics. The vitality and imagination expressed in the names of these churches are the basics for this research.

### **Statement of Problem**

There has been a substantial body of literature on naming practices in particular on African names. Most of these previous studies have focused on the personal naming practices of people (anthroponyms). For example, *A morphosemantic analysis of the Kamue personal names* (Ngamsa et al, 2013); *A socio-cultural and linguistic analysis of postcolonial Christian naming practices in Zimbabwe* (Mashiri et al, 2013); Mignola 2001; Tatira 2004; Ageykum 2006; Adniyi 2008; Makondo 2009, 2011, 2013. Most of these previous studies focused on the naming practices of places (toponyms). For instance, *Amorpho-semantic analysis of selected towns and village names in Kwahu, Eastern region, Ghana; Beer halls* (Makondo 2011).

Others have also investigated institutional names which are less common than personal names and place names. Such studies include a survey of names of financial institutions – *study of credit union names* (Boyd and Collins, 2008), *naming patterns of cemeteries* (Tarpley, 2006), *The Names of Chicago's Churches: A Tale of at Least Two Cultures* (Wilbur Zelinsky, 2002).

However, to the best of our knowledge, very little research has been done on the study of the names of churches or places of worship. This study therefore sets out to fill in the void in the literature. Therefore, we embark on this study to

investigate the onomastic peculiarities of the charismatic churches in Ghana in order to identify their naming patterns and trend.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- identify the general naming patterns of charismatic churches in Ghana
- analyse the general naming patterns used in naming charismatic churches
- highlight the common words used in naming churches other than the traditional denominational names

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following questions:

- What are the general naming patterns of charismatic churches in Ghana?
- How are the general naming patterns of charismatic churches in Ghana related to the traditional denominational church names?
- What are the common words used in naming charismatic churches in Ghana?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts the Semantic Framework. This is to enable the researchers to examine and analyse the charismatic church names thoroughly so as to discover and classify their naming patterns accordingly.

Semantics is generally the study of the meanings of words and phrases. Tesfaye (2014) defines ‘meaning as what a word means, signifies, expresses and its inner and psychological importance.’

### **Frame Semantics**

Frame Semantics is a theory that has been explored most in the fields of syntax. It is a theory that operates on simple

notion or assumption that any word (especially nouns and verbs) that is used represents a specific meaning or interest hence, it has its own background knowledge which the user or speaker must be aware of before he/she can use it or be able to communicate effectively. It therefore means that the background or the earlier knowledge one has will determine the kind of interpretation one will give to a word or a phenomenon.

With respect to word meanings, frame semantics research can be thought of as the effort to understand what reason a speech community might have for creating the category represented by the word, and to explain the word's meaning by presenting and clarifying that reason. This theory facilitates a split up of the selected names into analysable units.

Frame Semantics Theory as the name implies deals with frames and it is a term coined by Charles Fillmore (1982). Frames here refer to a mental conceptual structure or construct that a word evokes whenever it is used in a context. This conceptual structure plays a major role in one's attempt to get to the core meaning of a word. It therefore means that the background or the earlier knowledge one has will determine the kind of interpretation one will give to a word or a phenomenon. For instance, a high school student who for a brief period in his formation years or infancy came across a frog hopping on land will from that time form a 'frame' (concept/notion) of the fact that a frog can only live on land and not in water. Therefore, anywhere the word 'frog' is used, the notion that he has, that it is a land animal, will quickly be formed in his mind due to his earlier experience in life regarding where he found this animal. In a similar vein, should another student too see this same frog croaking in water in his earlier ages, he will also have the impression of a frog being an aquatic animal. These two

individuals will therefore have different interpretations of the habitat of this animal due to where each of them saw it sometime in the past.

In trying to explain this theory in the introduction of *Linguistics to the Morning Calm*, Fillmore alludes to the fact that ‘frame semantics comes from a tradition of empirical semantics rather than formal semantics’. He acknowledges the fact that the term ‘frame’ had been used extensively in cognitive psychology however, he adopts it in linguistics with the same notion of meaning in cognitive psychology. He sees each case frame as characterizing a small abstract ‘scene’ or ‘situation’. Therefore, to understand the semantic structure of a verb, it is necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes.

### **Research Design**

The study was realised with the help of qualitative content analysis. Content Analysis is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material or by systematically evaluating texts such as documents, oral communication, graphics (Terry College of Business, 2012). This study thus employs this technique to facilitate a closer and thorough examination of data collected through observation in order to arrive at appropriate conclusions and interpretations given to the findings.

### **Population of the Study**

The research population for this study is all names of charismatic churches in Ghana. These names were examined because they were more fascinating, intriguing and thought provoking.

### **Sampling Size**

In order to carry out appropriate interpretations and therefore make a concrete generalisation for this study, thirty



(30) names of charismatic churches in Ghana were selected. These thirty church names were purposively selected from the Kumasi Metropolis, specifically, Bosomtwe District (Atonsua – Kuntunase Road) and were recorded verbatim from sign posts on or near the church buildings. Proximity and familiarity with this district is the most compelling reason for choosing this area for the study.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

Systematic non-participant observation was adopted in data collection. Data/texts recorded were collected verbatim from sign posts of these places of worship.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were texts collected and recorded verbatim from sign boards/posts and buildings of places of worship in Ghana. It was then observed closely to identify the general naming patterns of these charismatic churches, analyse the general naming patterns used in the naming and highlight the common words used in the naming, which differ from the traditional denominational (church) names. The data were observed critically and content analyses were made on them accordingly. The analyses focused on the description of the data which were related to the topic of the study.

### **The General Naming Patterns of Charismatic Churches in Ghana**

Thirty sampled charismatic church names were analysed. Below are the church names:

*Caravan of Grace Outreach Ministry*  
*Royal House Chapel*  
*Lovehouse Chapel*  
*Kingdom Seekers Ministry International*  
*Tabernacle of Prayer Ministry*

*Prophetic Faith Church*  
*Faith Covenant Chapel International*  
*Resurrection Power Living Bread International Chapel*  
*Heaven Crown Ministry*  
*People of Faith Ministry*  
*Jesus Family Chapel International*  
*Voice of Truth Evangelist Ministry*  
*Christ is Lord Evangelic Ministry*  
*Christ Mission Church*  
*Jericho Movement Chapel International*  
*Noble Chapel International*  
*Wordspring City Church*  
*Faith Alive Chapel International*  
*Way to Heaven International Chapel*  
*Rock of Ages Worship Center*  
*Nazareth Salvation Prayer Ministry*  
*Power of Word Ministry*  
*The House of Power Ministry*  
*Gods Wonderful Church*  
*Divine Promiseland Chapel*  
*Livingstone Temple of Christ*  
*Fruitfull Hiil Chapel*  
*Breakthrough Family Ministries International*  
*Harvest Chapel International*

As part of their names, they all had a term to connote their belongingness to a place of worship. These terms, however, differed from one place of worship to another. A part of this sampled group maintained the generic term ‘church’ and ‘chapel’ (which over the years have become the most common, popular and very traditional name ascribed to Christian places of

worship). Others had also adopted varied quasi-generic terms to connote this same concept. These quasi-generic terms were either a word or a group of words that were functioning as a unit, for example, ‘Ministries’, ‘Worship Center’ and ‘Chapel International’. Table 1 further illustrates this.

<b>Church Name</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Church	4	13.3%
Ministry	7	23.3%
Chapel	4	13.3%
Ministry(ies) International	2	6.7%
Chapel International	6	20.1%
International Chapel	2	6.7%
Worship Center	1	3.3%
Prayer Ministry	2	6.7%
Temple of Christ	1	3.3%
Evangelic Ministry	1	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 1: Generic and Quasi-Generic Terms found in charismatic churches in Ghana*

These generic and quasi-generic terms outlined in Table 1 indicates that out of the thirty (30) church names that were sampled, eight of them, representing 26.6% bore the generic term ‘Church’ and ‘Chapel’. The rest had in varying degrees a quasi-generic term to connote a place of worship. These terms constituted 73.4% of the sample.

The quasi-generic term, ‘Ministry(ies)’, which appeared highest, occurred 7 times representing 23.3%. It was closely followed by the term ‘Chapel International’. This term appeared 6 times indicating 20.1%. ‘International Chapel’, another variation, also appeared 2 times representing 6.7%. Other variations of the term ‘Ministry’ like ‘Ministry International’ appeared twice representing 6.7%; ‘Evangelic Ministry’, 3.3%; and ‘Temple of Christ’ and ‘Worship Center’ occurring once, representing 3.3% each.

To make the presentation and discussion of these terms clearer and more comprehensible, we decided to operate with the following categorizations – the linguistic, and morphological and semantic nature of these names.

### **The Linguistic Nature**

The first section of this presentation deals with the lexical nature of the names studied. After a careful study of these generic and quasi-generic terms mentioned in Table 1, we further uncovered the linguistic entity of these churches’ names. It was observed that these names operated as a linguistic element. First, as a proper noun because they signified a specific place, as described by Downing and Locke (2006), in this case, a place of worship. Example is the *Royal House Chapel, Christ Mission Church*. Moreover, these names were written with the initials capitalized as any proper noun requires.

This discovery agrees with Izumi (2012) when he describes these names as compound proper nouns. According to him, when nouns or names such as ‘Holy’, ‘Roman’, ‘Empire’ are independently used as a proper name of someone or something, it can be called a proper noun but when such same names change to ‘The Holy Roman Empire’, it no longer serves as simple proper noun but as a compound proper noun and/or other expressions. Indeed, this description ran through the data. For all of these charismatic church names, they were individual words with their own individual referents put together to refer to one referent.

Again, the researcher observed the sampled names as a noun/nominal group. This stemmed from the fact that all the names were made up of a group of individual words with the generic or quasi generic term as a noun and the headword of the group of words in question, thereby making it a noun group or nominal group. For instance, the name, *Prophetic Faith Church* can be described as such. The generic term ‘Church’ here, is a noun and takes up the role of the headword of this group of words, and the “Prophetic Faith” can be seen as a modifier, hence, a noun group. Examples are *Prophetic Faith **Church*** [Headword]; *Caravan of Grace Outreach **Ministry*** [headword]; *Faith Covenant **Chapel International*** [Headword].

It was realized that these headwords (which happen to be the generic and quasi-generic terms) had modifications in one way or another. These modifications were mostly, however, realised at the pre-modification stage. These modifications are outlined in

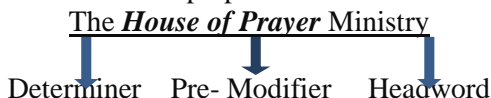
Table 2.

<i>Pre – Modification</i>	<i>(HEADWORD)</i>
<b>Caravan of Grace Outreach</b>	Ministry
<b>Royal House</b>	Chapel
<b>Lovehouse</b>	Chapel
<b>Kingdom Seekers</b>	Ministry International
<b>Tabernacle of Prayer</b>	Ministry
<b>Prophetic Faith</b>	Church
<b>Faith Covenant</b>	Chapel International
<b>Resurrection Power Living Bread</b>	International Chapel
<b>Heaven Crown</b>	Ministry
<b>People of Faith</b>	Ministry
<b>Jesus Family</b>	Chapel International
<b>Voice of Truth</b>	Evangelist Ministry
<b>Christ is Lord</b>	Evangelic Ministry
<b>Christ Mission</b>	Church
<b>Jericho Movement</b>	Chapel International
<b>Noble</b>	Chapel International
<b>Wordspring City</b>	Church
<b>Faith Alive</b>	Chapel International
<b>Way to Heaven</b>	International Chapel
<b>Rock of Ages</b>	Worship Center
<b>Nazareth Salvation</b>	Prayer Ministry
<b>Power of Word</b>	Ministry
<b>The House of Power</b>	Ministry
<b>Gods Wonderful</b>	Church
<b>Divine Promise land</b>	Chapel
<b>Livingstone</b>	Temple of Christ
<b>FruitfullHill</b>	Chapel

<b>Breakthrough Family</b>	Ministries International
<b>Harvest</b>	Chapel International

**Table 2 Modifications to the Generic/Quasi-Generic Terms**

These modifications as seen in table above are varied. One can see that all the thirty names have their own form of modifiers. These modifications are made of determiners, adjectives, nouns and even prepositions. For instance,



Here, one can see that ‘the’ is a definite article that functions as a determiner; ‘House of Prayer’ which functions as a modifier to the headword and noun, ‘ministry’ is made up of a noun, ‘house’ and preposition of complement, ‘of prayer’. This phrase can, thus, be said to be functioning as an attributive adjective to the noun, ‘ministry’, describing the kind of place of worship you will meet.

Again, the name *Kingdom Seekers Ministry International* also follows same pattern. The phrase, *Kingdom Seekers* is seen modifying the headword and quasi-generic term, *Ministry International*. The modification precedes its noun and headword, thus, its name pre-modification. The modifier is however made up of a compound noun, *Kingdom Seekers*, which is attributing more information and details to the place of worship under discussion.

Linguistically, it can be concluded that charismatic church names have a peculiar pattern in naming their churches. They all go through some sort of pre-modification. These pre-modifiers modify the headword (whether a generic or a quasi-generic term), thereby giving them an attributive function like an

adjective does. This thus gives these specially named places of worship a linguistic badge.

Moreover, these pre-modifiers can either be a word as seen in *{Harvest}Chapel International*, *{Noble} Chapel*, *{Lovehouse} Chapel* or a group of words as in, *{Breakthrough Family} Ministries International*; *{Divine Promise Land} Chapel*.

### **Semantic Nature**

Again, more than one meaning can be derived from these charismatic names. These meanings could have a denotative meaning, shift to a connotation and even end with an associated meaning. Let's examine this in two categories – the generic and quasi-generic terms, and their modifiers.

### ***Generic and Quasi-Generic Terms***

With reference to table 1, the generic and quasi-generic terms used by charismatic churches in Ghana are *Church*, *Chapel*, *Ministry*, *Ministry (ies) International*, *Chapel International*, *Temple of Christ*, *Prayer Ministry*, *Evangelic Ministry*, and *Worship Center*.

First, the words “church” and “chapel”, traditionally, denote a public place of worship and as such their connotation and denotation are the same in the context used. Aside these traditional names, the most common and trendier word among the terms was ‘ministry’. From the denotative perspective, one can say that the term ministry, which ordinarily means the period of time spent working as a minister in a church or the work and duties of a minister, has been adopted and even expanded to mean a place of worship in Ghana, as seen in, ‘*People of Faith [Ministry]*, *Heaven Crown [Ministry]*’, *Power of Word [Ministry]*.



Presumptively too, it could mean that these names are being used by the givers of the name to describe a work or duty that has been handed over to them (by God). No wonder a couple of such names specifically have their task attached to their names. For instance, Nazareth Salvation[**Prayer Ministry**], Tabernacle of [**Prayer Ministry**] and Voice of Truth[**Evangelic Ministry**] seem to communicate to their readers that their exact purpose of existence is just prayers and evangelism.

Interestingly, this term ‘ministry’ has been used in varied forms. Some of these terms have the word ‘international’ attached to its use to read [**Ministry International**] or [**Chapel International**]. The point of interest here is the use of the word ‘international’. Conventionally, the word international involves or is connected to two or more countries. However, most of these places of worship under study are predominantly local and one wonders why ‘international’. But a careful study of these terms and the context in which they have been used, indicate that the givers may be eyeing an extensive and exploratory dreams of reaching that level.

Finally, the last quasi-generic term worthy of mention is the term ‘*Worship Center*’. This particular expression seems to communicate clearly and pointedly to a place of worship just as its name denotes.

### ***Morphological Nature***

The structure and pattern of classifying the expressions used to modify the generic and quasi-generic terms of these sampled church names are fascinating. This is grouped under the special headings - coinage, descriptive, commendatory, and possessive:

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCH NAMES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Descriptive	20	67
Coinage	3	10
Commendatory	4	13
Possessive	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

***Table 3 Characteristics of charismatic church names***

### **Descriptive**

The dominant feature that emerged as a pattern in the terms that were used as modifications to the generic and quasi-generic terms was their descriptive nature. These names of the churches carried a telling effect that is able to create a mental image in the minds of readers that is borne out of their connotative meanings. Out of the 30 sampled names, 20 representing 67% of them carried this descriptive connotation and they portrayed a particular sense of experience to expect.

For instance, the word ‘Caravan’ as seen in the term, ‘*Caravan of Grace Outreach Ministry*’ denotatively means a road vehicle without an engine that is pulled by a car, designed for people to live and sleep in, especially when they are on holiday/vacation or a covered vehicle that is pulled by a horse and used for living in. Nonetheless, in this context, it connotes a carrier of God’s Grace. That is to say, “Caravan of Grace” is a place of worship that one is likely to experience abundant Grace of God. Meanwhile the word ‘outreach’ which denotes the activity of a group that provides a service or advice to people in the community, especially those who cannot or are unlikely to come to an office, etc. for help is attached to the term. ‘*Caravan of Grace Outreach Ministry*’ therefore connotes a place of

worship on wheels that intends to reach out to people by moving from one place to another in order to get them God's grace.

Another name worthy of mention is '*Kingdom Seekers Ministry International*'. The word kingdom denotes a country ruled by a king or queen. 'Seekers', on the other hand, denotes a group of people searching for something. Put the two together, one is able to draw a conclusion that such name is pointing to the fact that they are people who are searching for their way to God's kingdom. Hence, Kingdom Seekers a description of the kind of activity they represent. This communicates their ideas and visions directly to its reader.

*"Tabernacle of Prayer Ministry"* also indicates a place of prayer. The word tabernacle suggests to readers a place of worship of a Christian group. Thus the name Tabernacle of Prayer connotes a place of worship solely reserved for prayers, thereby giving the name its descriptive nature.

Another name is *"Royal House Chapel"*. The "Royal House" as seen in the name seems to be describing the kind of place of worship (chapel) one is likely to find. The word royal is connected with a king or a queen, and a house, on the other hand, is a building for people to live in. The phrase "royal house" thus describes a kind a house that is connected with God's royalty (the King). In other words, *"Royal House Chapel"* is descriptive of the kind of place of worship.

Another example is *"People of Faith Ministry"*. Readers are presented with a clear description of the inhabitants of this Christian place of worship. The modification, *"People of Faith"* connotes people with trusted and strong religious beliefs. Similarly, *"Heaven Crown Ministry"* connotes a description that is geared towards the reward to be received from heaven – a crown.

The word noble as seen in “*Noble Chapel International*” denotes several meanings. Noble at one point, could be described as possessing fine personal qualities that people admire. At another point, it can be used to refer to people belonging to a family of high social class or rank. A question then arises – which of these meanings is being communicated to readers? In the same vein, “*Harvest Chapel International*” follows same pattern. The use of the word ‘harvest’ leaves the reader with several interpretations to the meaning being communicated because of the variety of meanings the word derives.

A name like “*Way to Heaven International Chapel*” for example, clearly communicates to its readers an image of a path that ultimately leads to heaven, a place believed to be the home of God. This is highly descriptive.

“*Divine Promise Land Chapel*” indicates a biblical allusion to the promise land that was assured the Israelites in the Bible. The name thus describes this chapel as the equivalent to the promise that was given years ago. Readers’ attention is therefore easily taken to biblical times making it quite difficult to understand exactly why the giver of such a name wants to communicate.

*Resurrection Power Living Bread International Chapel* is another name worth examining. A careful look at this name reveals that readers are given a lot to consume at once. First is “Resurrection Power” and the second is “Living Bread”. The former connotes the power that comes with the time when Jesus Christ died and came back to life. From the Christianity point of view, this resurrection represents salvation; thus, the perception as a source of divine power. The latter, on the other hand, happens to be an attribute given to Jesus Christ. The name therefore combines both connotative and associative meanings to

describe this kind of place of worship and extensively, communicate the givers intent and purpose to the reader.

### **Coinage**

The second category captures all those charismatic church names that have been invented or created outside the English lexemes. Out of the thirty sampled names, three representing, 10% bore such names. Charismatic church names such as *Lovehouse [Chapel]*, *Livingstone [Temple of Christ]*, and *Wordspring City [Church]* are all good examples of coined words. A closer look at these names revealed that these coined words could be classified as compound words. For instance; “Lovehouse” is a combination of two nouns, ‘love’ and ‘house’. Similarly, “Wordspring” is made up of the lexemes (nouns), ‘word’ and ‘spring’ and “Livingstone” comprises ‘living’ and ‘stone’.

Going forward, it can be concluded that the meanings derived from these words are worthy of mention. For example: the meaning of the lexeme, ‘word’ as in “Wordspring” represents the word of God as seen in the Bible while ‘spring’ connotes a place where water comes naturally to the surface from under the ground. As such, one can say that the name ‘Wordspring’ connotes a source where the word of God continually emanates. Same can also be said of *Lovehouse Chapel*. This name connotes a place or a building where one can only find love. Therefore, the name *Lovehouse Chapel* is a descriptive name given to the place of worship where one is likely to experience this kind of emotion as they worship God.

The last of these examples is *Livingstone Temple of Christ*. The word ‘living’ which denotes an entity that is still alive and in existence has been merged with an inanimate and non-living entity, ‘stone’. The paradoxical image it creates in a

readers mind is a worthwhile exercise. This is used to describe the Temple of Christ which happens to be the place of worship under discussion here.

### **Commendatory**

Another category is commendatory. These are names that contain praise or commendation. Such names included *Christ is Lord Evangelic Ministry*, *Rock of Ages Worship Center*, *Power of Word Ministry*, *Voice of Truth Evangelist Ministry*, *The House of Power Ministry* and they constituted about 13% of the 30 names sampled.

*Christ is Lord Evangelic Ministry*, for example, communicates a commendatory message. The commendatory expression also express a sentence – Christ is Lord, where ‘Christ’ is the subject; is, the verb; and Lord, a complement of the verb. *Power of Word Ministry*, similarly, carries the same connotation. Here, the giver of the name seems to be extolling the potency of the word of God that emanates from that place of worship. *Rock of Ages Worship Center* equally connotes an unmovable, unchangeable and unshakeable ‘Worship Center’. This can be termed as commendatory.

*Voice of Truth Evangelist Ministry* can also be described as commendatory since it is complementing a particular evangelist. It suggests that the evangelist has the voice of truth. In the same vein, *The House of Power Ministry* also connotes a commendation for how powerful the place of worship is.

### **Possessive**

The last category for classification is the possessives. These names seek to express some sort of ownership to someone. In other words, it seems to be portraying that these places of worship belong to somebody. We have names such as *Gods Wonderful Church* which points to the fact that the church

or place of worship is that of Gods; *Christ Mission Church* connotes that they exist because of Christ's mission. *Jesus Family Chapel International*, the last of such names, equally shifts readers' attention to the fact that the house of worship being described has that element of possession of a family that is solely for Jesus. The givers of these names clearly want to communicate to their readers the idea of the one who really owns the element being named.

However, we also realized that these words that were part of the group of words used in describing the church names defied simple grammatical rules. One vital element of such defiance was the disregard for the apostrophe sign to indicate possession as seen in the following:

*Gods Wonderful Church*

*Christ Mission Church*

*Jesus Family Chapel International*

Originally, these words – *God*, *Christ* and *Jesus* – belong to the noun word class because they are naming words. Therefore, they need an apostrophe to show possessive marker. That is to say their correct form of the names should have read:

*God's* *Wonderful Church*

*Christ's* *Mission Church*

*Jesus'* *Family Chapel International*

It is also important to mention that in the context where they find themselves (as church names), they take up roles of pre-modification (adjectives) with the help of other words as seen in the following: [*Gods Wonderful*] *Church*; [*Christ Mission*] *Church*; [*Jesus Family*] *Chapel International*.

### **Other observations**

This study also noted that certain names of the sampled list were ill-formed. For some names, it was a spelling error. For

instance *Fruitfull Hiil Chapel*. The word ‘fruitfull’ is spelt wrongly. It contains double ‘l’ instead of one.

For others, it was simply a misrepresentation of the singular form for the plural form. There is the wrong use of the noun ‘ministries’ instead of ‘ministry’. The idea portrayed in the use of ministries in the name, *Breakthrough Family Ministries International* suggests that this place of worship is more than one entity when in fact, it is really is a singular linguistic badge and concept of a particular place of worship.

Furthermore, the idea presented by the name *Faith Alive Chapel International* appears to have left something lingering on the reader’s mind. Closely studying the name, it is apparent the giver of the name wants to describe a particular kind of faith. However, that intent is not fully achieved because of the omission or disarrangement of the modifiers – ‘faith’ and ‘alive’. These two words, from our understanding, fail to collocate properly to bring out a clearer and straightforward meaning. Perhaps, if the giver had rearranged the words to read ‘Alive Faith’ or introduced the expression, ‘that’s’ to produce *Faith that’s Alive*, or chosen the words *Ever-living Faith Chapel International*, there would have been some sort of sanity and clarity in the name.

## **Findings**

The charismatic church names considered in this paper clearly depict that indeed charismatic church names have peculiar naming patterns just as personal naming patterns. These peculiarities are mirrored in their generic and quasi-generic terms that are used to represent their identity as Christian places of worship. Such quasi-generic terms include ‘Ministry’, ‘Worship Center’, ‘Ministry International’, ‘Evangelic Ministry’ amongst others and they were terms/ expressions used to connote



similar meanings that the traditional and generic terms such as ‘church and chapel,’ are used to achieve. It was evident that out of the 30 names that were sampled, the generic term “church occupied about 13.3% of the total sample representing, 4 of such names; the other term ‘chapel’ also occupied about 40.1% representing, 12 names of these charismatic churches. It is worth noting, however, that 26.8% of these names with the generic term, chapel have been slightly modified with the term, ‘International’, thereby making it more of a quasi-generic term than a generic term. From the study, these quasi-generic terms, on the other hand, have ‘Ministry’ and its modifications as the most used term/ expression in naming charismatic churches. It dominated this study with about 12 names, representing 40% of the 30 names sampled.

Secondly, it was realised that givers of such names picked out specific expressions of their choice to modify these generic and quasi-generic terms, (which happens to be classified as the headword of these church names for purposes of this discussion). These words/ phrases used for modifications were newly invented (coinages), descriptive, commendatory or possessive. Other times too, they could carry more than one of these characteristics mentioned.

Lastly, we discovered that Zelinsky’s (2002) description of African American religion in contemporary Cook County as generally focusing on two themes, i.e., an ecstatic emotionalism and an upward and outward spiritual expansiveness was in fact very similar to the situation in Ghana here. All thirty sampled names of charismatic churches in Ghana equally bore such characteristics. It can therefore be concluded that naming of these places of worship depended critically on the spirituality of these religious communities in Ghana.

## Conclusion

The primary focus of this study was to establish how charismatic church names are formed by closely observing and studying the texts (names) recorded verbatim from sign posts and buildings of these places of worship. This was necessitated by the numerous fascinating names of charismatic churches in Ghana. These names never cease to catch one's attention wherever one goes in Ghana because of their ubiquitous and somewhat eccentric nature. Some of these names sometimes even force a smile on the reader's face. Other times too, readers are left in awe and bewilderment about such name coinages and formation. As a result of this, we decided to venture into this area of study.

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