

**E. P. Seminary**  
**Peki/Blengo, VR**  
**Ghana**  
16 August 2020

The gathering may have been smaller and the celebration more subdued but the joy of God's presence and the excitement of accomplishment and new beginnings still permeated the air as the Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary gathered for its annual service of consecration 15 August. Customarily held in late May, the service is celebrated with a large worshipping community in Accra or Ho. In addition to the congregants and graduates, several hundred family members gather to give thanks to God and seek God's blessings on those being sent-forth into service.



By tradition, graduation is typically held on the open campus of the seminary in mid-June. Again, several hundred family members attend. Following both consecration and graduation a festive meal would be served and there would be much singing and dancing. COVID-19 changed all of the traditions of both consecration and graduation.



In March, schools across the country were closed. Gatherings of more than twenty-five were forbidden and even those gatherings had to be outside with 2m social distancing and masks. Without classes, students could not complete their final courses or exams. With firm restrictions neither gatherings nor services of any kind could take place. In late June, the government permitted classes for students graduating only. Thirty-seven ministry and twenty music department students returned to campus in July to complete their graduation requirements.



As the time for consecration and graduation drew near, seminary staff evaluated new government guidelines for both secular and religious gatherings. Secular gatherings (by the guidelines, graduation is secular) are limited to fifty people. Religious celebrations are permitted as long as they are inside, (numbers limited by the 2m rule), masks are worn, and time limited to one hour. With these strictures in mind, it was decided to hold a limited service of consecration at the Lorenz Wolf Church in Peki. The service would include the rewarding of diplomas.

Admittedly, 2m distancing was not strictly observed but spacing was set for faculty and graduates. All who entered the church were required to mask, queue for a temperature check, and wash their hands. To complete within the allotted time, the service was trimmed of the usual fanfares of music, dancing, individually recognizing each student, class reflections, and presentation of gifts. The Rt. Rev. Dr. D. S. S. Agidi, Moderator of the General Assembly, delivered the sermon based on Genesis 1:26-31a. He emphasized all are created in the image of God. While we are all called to be in ministry with God to protect creation, those being consecrated into both pastoral ministry and the ministry of sacred music have a unique calling to oversee and to encourage others to be a part of caring. He also shared that we meet in difficult times but God's promise is not to comfort and ease but to be with us. Today we may not sing in our customary way, but someday we will again dance with thanksgiving.

*Rev. Dr. Larry Colvin*  
*Mission Co-Worker*