

## OMSU-NA FEATURED MAWULIAN

### Rev. Solomon Kwami Avotri, Ph.D., '59



Solomon K. Avotri was born at Sovie, in the Volta Region of Ghana, on January 23, 1937. His father was Matthias Kofi Avotri, and his mother Cecelia Yawa Tsekpo. His father was a farmer, and his mother, a pottery maker. Solomon was the first born, and after him, three girls and one more boy were born. Those were very hard times. Healthcare was particularly hard to find, and as a result, one of the girls and the boy did not survive childhood. Unfortunately, his mother died too when he was only eight years old, and his father was very sick at the time his mother died. Childhood became a struggle for him.

He grew up mostly in the home of his grandparents, Johannes and Alice Avotri. Johannes was the founder and chief presbyter of the E.P. Church at Sovie. Naturally then, he started schooling at the then E. P. Primary School, continuing with what was then called Junior School. Both the Primary and Junior Schools lasted six years. After the six years, he entered what was then called Senior School (later known as Middle School) at the then E. P. Senior School at Kpando in the Volta Region, just four miles away from his hometown. It was a boarding school, so he had to leave home to stay in the boarding house. He was twelve years old at this time.

Two years into the Senior School, overwhelmed by the sorrow of the family tragedies, he dropped out of school for two years. However, he realized that there was no other viable alternative for him than to go back to school. So he went back in 1954 to what was then E. P. Middle School at Vakpo in the Volta Region. He wrote the Common Entrance Examination, and was admitted to Form 1 at Mawuli School in January of 1955. (That time the school year was from January to December).

He was among the very needy students at Mawuli School. But when Rev. Dr. Trost got to know him as someone capable of using his *hands* efficiently, he put him in a work-study program, and he worked in the afternoons after classes and at weekends in Dr. Trost's

orchard, and also on the general Mawuli School campus. However, it turned out that the *heart* (of Mawuli School's *Head, Heart, and Hand*) gripped him as strongly as the *hand*, and he became involved in Sunday School teaching at the Ho E.P. Church Primary School campus, and also, together with other interested Mawuli students, organized Sunday worship services at the Ho Leper Settlement under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Trost.

He was admitted to the then Sixth Form at Mawuli School in 1960, but he withdrew and gained admission to the then University of Science and Technology, Kumasi for the Sixth Form course, since his interest was in engineering. However, he discontinued the engineering course and enrolled in a Mathematics teaching certification course at the then Advanced Teacher Training College (A.T.T.C.), Winneba. After graduating from the A.T.T.C., he taught Mathematics at the then Abuakwa State College, Kibi, and Accra Teacher Training College. Dr. Avotri was a founding member of the "Volta Evangelistic Association" (VEA) that was formed in 1965 with the purpose of doing evangelism the Volta Region of Ghana.

In 1972, he got married to Christine Kpeh, and they have four children (three boys and one girl): Kafui, Mawufemor, Setorwu, and Edem. They are all grown up now and living in the United States. Kafui and Mawufemor also attended Mawuli School. In 1985, his first marriage fell apart; and he is currently happily married to Rosina Adiku; they have been married for fifteen years now. Together, they have a blended family of six children, now including Etornam and Mawuli Theophilus Goka.

In 1975, he entered the University of Ghana, Legon, and graduated with BSc. (Administration with Accounting major) in 1978. After graduation, he again taught Mathematics briefly at the Accra Academy. It was during his final year at Legon that he felt called into full-time Christian ministry, and was admitted to the Trinity College at Legon. But he had the opportunity to come to the United States where he entered United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio in 1979, and graduated with the Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree in 1982.

After the MDiv program, he enrolled in the Joint Ph.D. program of Iliff School of Theology and the University of Denver at Denver, Colorado. He graduated with a Ph.D. in Religious and Theological Studies in 1991. In 1993, Dr. Avotri was ordained as Minister of Word and Sacrament by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In 2002, he was also ordained as Elder by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Dr. Avotri has been teaching at the Payne Theological Seminary, Wilberforce, Ohio since his graduation from Denver. He is currently a tenured Professor of Biblical Studies at Payne Seminary.

Dr. Avotri loves Mawuli School, because he knows that Mawuli School took him from his raw, rural roots, and gave him the opportunity and foundation for higher education, and together with the amazing grace of God, he began the journey that ended up in what he has become today. On May 27 2001, Dr. Avotri preached the sermon at the Memorial Service of the late Rev. Dr. Walter P. Trost that was held at the Peace Church United Church of Christ in Bensenville, IL. Dr. Avotri expressed gratitude to the then OMSU North America Executive for the opportunity to pay tribute to the Rev. Dr. Trost for all that he had done for him personally, and for Mawuli School in general.

Finally, Dr. Avotri believes that biblical principles constitute solid foundation on which one can construct one's philosophy of life. He points out the Apostle Paul's triad of these principles: "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13), and that in every individual's life, there is always room for growth in relation to these principles.