FACTS ABOUT MY BAPTISM IN COLUMBUS

(A Response to Questions Raised About My Baptism)

By

© Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD

October 17, 2014

[NOTE: The response below was addressed to a respected Church official who wanted to know the facts about my baptism. I'm sharing it with the public because I continue receiving similar questions. However, out of deep respect for some leaders, I have consciously chosen not to say more than I need to. I have also not attached the documents referenced in this letter.--SKP]

Introduction

Because of a calculated attempt by some to question the legitimacy of my baptism, and because of misrepresentations by some otherwise well-meaning individuals and leaders—together with inquiries from folks who desire to know the truth—I find it necessary to set forth the facts concerning my baptism in the Columbus Church (in Ohio), instead of doing so in the Ann Arbor (Michigan) Church where I submitted to church discipline three years earlier.

Let me begin by first stating clearly that, contrary to the misrepresentation by certain
agenda-driven individuals and organizations who, for various reasons, have attempted to
delegitimize my baptism, there was nothing clandestine, inappropriate, illegal, or unprecedented
about my baptism on June 20, 2014.

Our Church Manual (2010) is very clear on what is expected in the matter of reinstating
members who had been previously removed from membership, and what to do where baptism
is not possible in their previous churches. It states:

“Such reinstatement should preferably be in the church from which the member was dismissed.
However, when this is not possible, the church where the person is requesting reinstatement
must seek information from the former church about the reasons for which the person was
removed from membership” (p. 66).

I want to assure you that my baptism was done in good faith, being in harmony with the
provisions stipulated above. Thus, I did not set a precedence that was unforeseen in the Church
Manual, the constitution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As I will later show, those who raised
doubts about my baptism are the same group which, for various reasons, embarked upon an
unprecedented campaign to prevent my baptism. When their efforts failed, they resorted to
discredit the baptism on spurious reasons or falsehood.

It’s not my intention in this letter to address the far-reaching theological implications of those
who seek to delegitimize my baptism, and its impact on both the work I do for a living and my
usefulness to God’s work anywhere in the world. Rather, I seek to share the circumstances
leading to my decision to be baptized in Columbus Church and the steps taken to do so.
Hopefully it will correct any misunderstanding or doubts that may exist about the propriety of my
baptism in a church other than the one that disciplined me.

A Background

My moral fall and submission to church discipline in June 2011 has generated a lot of interest. It
has also resulted in a calculated effort by certain individuals to ensure that I never get
re-baptized—or if at all, that the baptism does not take place until after several years. Their
reasons differ—ranging from ideological or theological, political, pragmatic, emotional, personal,
and even racial. For example:

- **Ideology:** There were those who, for ideological reasons, did not want my voice to be heard in the church—either by voice or by pen—on such theological issues as women’s ordination, homosexuality, creation evolution, worship styles, “spiritual formation” & emergent theology. For such, the easiest way to achieve their objective was to suggest that I be not re-baptized—or if ever at all, it should be after “several years.” At the very minimum, they would say that the baptism should take place after the 2015 GC session.

(Some of these individuals are the same group who mounted pressure on some Church Administrators in September 2012 to issue an unprecedented statement banning all my works—an action that raises serious theological, ethical, missiological, and even legal questions. They are the same militant group that has been campaigning for people to boycott buying, reading, listening to, or even quoting any of my works. For a detailed response to the Church Administrators’ action, see a document titled “Turn Off the Tap”, which I'll share with you in a separate document.)

- **Questionable Theology:** Some who were opposed to my baptism were influenced in their views by a biblically-questionable understanding of church discipline (they view church discipline as punitive or retributive, not restorative). Some in this group also have a biblically-defective view about repentance, baptism, and restoration of repentant sinners (they claim that it requires many years for some sinners to experience true repentance and restoration with God, and thus much time (years) is needed before penitent sinners are baptized and restored to full fellowship within the body of Christ. In some cases, some of these individuals, holding to some quasi-Catholic view, think that a repentant sinner's salvation rests in the hands of human beings—whether Counselor, Theologian, Elder, Pastor, or Church Administrator—who alone can know when a sinner has repented enough.

- **Slander & Accusations:** Others who sought to bar me from church membership did so on the grounds of slanderous/libelous accusations and/or false/malicious gossips and rumors. These individuals claimed that my past sins (which had been repented of and forsaken) were not only moral in nature but also criminal acts. Though never been prosecuted or convicted of any crimes, the purveyors of these accusations tried to brand me a criminal and alleged that I pose a threat to the “spiritual and physical safety” of church members. On this view, if I should ever be baptized at all, it shouldn’t be any time soon. In other words, the “wait for several years” argument is based on accusations, suspicion, and mistrust. This view is pushed most vehemently by some pro-women's ordination activists who were eyeing the 2015 GC Session.
Why I Decided To Be Baptized in Another Church: Facts About My Baptism in Ohio

(Note: If their accusations were true, it is surprising that they have not reported me to the appropriate law enforcement agencies or taken legal actions against me. It is clear that the accusations are politically motivated and intended to tarnish me so that people will not read or listen to any messages I have presented).

· **Secular Psychology:** Still, others who had been opposed to my baptism base their views on the premises of secular psychology—namely, the teaching that sinners (any kind of sinners, including adulterers) are “addicts” and therefore need “many years” of psychological therapy before they and those impacted by their sins can be “cured” or “healed.” For them “once a sinner, almost always a sinner”! (Replace “sinner” with the words alcoholic, homosexual, adulterer, liar, bad-tempered, proud, etc. and you get an idea of what this teaching is about). This view is vocally advanced by certain “counselors” and “volunteers” associated with a particular independent organization in the church.

(Unfortunately, this manner of thinking is gaining currency within our ranks as some well-meaning individuals—leaders and members alike—are substituting secular psychology for the Word of God, or attempting to baptize its teachings into the Church. In their understanding, sexual sins [like fornication, adultery, homosexuality] and other sins of habit [like, lying, gluttony, alcoholism, selfishness, jealousy, bitterness, etc.] are not just moral choices to be overcome through genuine conversion and biblical sanctification, but they are sickness/addictions to be overcome through years of professional counseling and psychotherapy. A person has not “repented enough” unless he/she is certified by these “counselors,” psychotherapists, or their “volunteers.” Interestingly, at least one of these “counselors,” who initially carried herself as a "counselor," has been shown to not be a licensed counselor after all.)

· **Politics:** There were also political reasons why some had wanted me to stay “unbaptized” for a very long time: They simply don’t want to face the wrath of certain militant individuals and interest groups that had vested-interest in this issue in the pursuit of their personal, professional, and group’s agenda. Because of political expediency some church leaders felt that it’s better for one repentant sinner to be sacrificed on the altar of some baptismal purgatory than that they suffer the political attack from these well-known individuals and group activists.

· **Pragmatic:** There were also some well-meaning individuals who, influenced by all the above, had urged me to wait for “several years” supposedly for my own good and the good of the church—locally and globally—since all had been severely “damaged” by my past sins and therefore need “healing.” Though these well-meaning individuals differ in their motivation, their
conclusions are the same as the psychology-based argument—namely, for the sake of “healing” (theirs and others) repentant sinners must wait several years before being baptized. I believe this conclusion is based on shaky foundations and the theology it teaches raises some fundamental questions for a Bible-believing Church.

- **Promotion/Advertisement:** Unfortunately, certain individuals and their organizations have also tried to “cash in” on my spiritual failure to either advance their personal self-interest, make names for themselves, pursue their political agendas, or boost the ratings on the websites of their organizations. Thus, as long as they could raise questions about my baptism they could exploit my misfortunes to promote or advertise themselves or their causes.

- **Racial:** Finally, the views of others on my rebaptism were based on their personal desire to see me “go away”—from USA, Michigan, or Ann Arbor to, say Africa or somewhere else, where I supposedly belong. This is more of a racist argument, and was driven by the agenda of some personal and group agenda. Some perceptive observers, citing many instances of moral failures in the ministry, believe that I was singled out for such preferential treatment because I am African or Black.

I am sure there are other reasons. But the people who had embraced the above views would be among those who would later be opposed to my baptism. In my opinion, none of the above motivations and reasons stand the test of biblical scrutiny. The arguments seriously undermine our biblical teachings and our commitment to the sole-authority of Scripture on all matters of faith and practice. Moreover, the dangerous teaching that keeps a repentant sinner in a baptismal limbo or purgatory neutralizes the soul-winning mission of a church. Above all, they have either been willfully ignorant about the facts of my baptism or they have simply chosen to lie about it so as to pursue their agenda (whether personal, ideological, political, or even racial).

In a document titled **“Must We Wait?: Crucial Questions on Baptism and Rebaptism”** I expressed grave concerns about the “wait for several years” theology of baptism that was being advocated. My main worry was the serious theological implications of standing in the way of another’s baptism and how the Bible does not show that repentant sinners must wait “for several years” before being baptized. (In a separate document, I will share the “Must We Wait” document with you.)
Why I Decided To Be Baptized

Several reasons encouraged my decision to be baptized. They included the incessant question from many quarters as to what or who was preventing me from being baptized. Also, the continued delay to be baptized was creating an impediment in my personal witness as a Christian in reaching out to unbelievers. Furthermore, the delay in the baptism was also creating an impediment in the work I am doing for a living—the work of writing, speaking, consulting, training, resource development and distribution—and taking a toll on the organizations I work for or work with.

But the most important reason why I decided to be baptized after three years was my desire to honor Christ and His Word. My decision was also in full harmony with clear principles in the Spirit of Prophecy.

The Ann Arbor church had earlier assigned some of its Board members to work closely with and maintain spiritual oversight of me and my family and to work towards my reintegration with the local church through baptism. This, they did faithfully for two years, in a church that has had two full-time and one interim pastors in the last three years. Since there was nothing preventing me from being baptized, I feared that an unnecessarily long wait before my baptism could put at risk my salvation. Urged by one of E.G. White counsels that:

“Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God's spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, "The Lord Our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6. {CCh 295.2}

If baptism is “the sign of entrance to Christ’s spiritual kingdom” and “a positive condition with which all must comply,” why then would I delay or not want to be baptized? As I (and other Bible-believers) saw it, the politics and ideology that teaches that repentant sinners should never be rebaptized—or if at all, must wait for “several years”—is a dangerous, extra-biblical teaching that puts at risk a person’s salvation.

My family prayerfully chose, based on the authority of God’s Word and the clear teachings of
the Church, that I had to work out my salvation with fear and trembling by seeking for baptism legitimately, though it might upset human ideologies and suppositions that had previously worked actively against it.

Steps Towards My Baptism in the Columbus Church

The process of my re-baptism was neither clandestine nor reckless. Due diligence was followed, in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Church Manual, and with counsel from many godly church leaders and scholars around the world who were familiar with the politics being played with my baptism. It is never my intention to embarrass anyone, but IF it becomes necessary, and in the appropriate manner, I will share with the world all the details that preceded my baptism in another church.

For now, however, I'm taking this opportunity to officially share with you the facts of my baptism in another church. I will attempt do so in such a way as not to embarrass many of the key players to the point of weakening their spiritual influence. While I disagree with them and deeply saddened by their actions, I still love and respect them. I extend the same grace of forgiveness to them that our Lord graciously extended to me.

Upholding Biblical Principles. One of the reasons why I sought to uphold our biblical teachings and practices on church discipline was that I was aware of the way some in the Western world were questioning or playing games with the practice of church discipline. It was my prayer that my willing submission to church discipline would be a good opportunity to demonstrate how a converted, Bible-believing Christian should conduct himself when disciplined by his church.

To this end, I had always insisted on being baptized in my local Ann Arbor Church in Michigan. But I eventually chose to be baptized in Columbus, Ohio, after it was evident that the new Pastor in my former Ann Arbor Church was yielding to outside pressure to not baptize me. Without going into all the details or saying anything that may be misunderstood as attempting to embarrass or weaken his spiritual influence, I can only state that the impetus that finally led me to seek baptism elsewhere was a letter the Ann Arbor Pastor wrote to me on January 28, 2014. The substantive part said:
“I am convicted that it is not the right time or place to re-baptize you. I do not know when the right time will come, where the right place will be or who the minister will be to officiate. I believe that Lord will reveal all of this to you as He sees fit.”

For the record, I want to state that the new pastor’s unilateral position was not shared by the elders of the church (all of who at different times had stated in writing that they saw no biblical impediment to my being baptized in the Ann Arbor Church). The church pastor had been in the church for only about eight (8) months and, at the time of his January 28 letter, had NOT visited me or my family even once. In a later admission when I raised this issue of his apparent neglect (and, hence, the objective basis for his opposition to my baptism), he stated that he had not also visited about 95% of the church members.

In contrast, the elders had known me for years and some of them had been assigned to maintain spiritual oversight of me and my family and to work closely with me towards my reintegration with the local church through baptism. They took this assignment very seriously, a fact for which my family and I will be eternally grateful.

Besides the elders, it’s equally noteworthy that the pastor would also not even allow our local church Board to vote on the issue of my baptism. Those who were familiar with the politics being played with my baptism believed the local pastor to have exceeded the bounds of his authority by doing this.

When it became clear that the local pastor’s unilateral actions were contrary to biblical teaching or the principles of fairness enshrined in the Church Manual, I had a choice of exercising my right by appealing to the Church at business meeting for reinstatement through baptism. This right is clearly expressed in our current Church Manual (2010 edition), p. 67, under the heading “The Right of Appeal or Reinstatement.

Although I had this right to appeal to the Church at business meeting, I felt that doing so would not only embarrass the church pastor, but would also divide the church (as members will be forced to choose between the pastor and the leaders who saw no biblical reason to deny or delay my baptism). After a prayerful consideration of the situation, I decided to seek rebaptism elsewhere.
Consequently, on January 30, 2014 (some six months before my baptism), I formally wrote the Ann Arbor Church Board that I had surrendered my long-cherished desire to be baptized in my local Ann Arbor church that dis-membered me in June 2011.

I want to reiterate again that I took the decision to seek baptism elsewhere only after my local church pastor had put his unilateral position in writing (stating, “I do not know when the right time will come, where the right place will be or who the minister will be to officiate. I believe that Lord will reveal all of this to you as He sees fit.”) and when it became clear that insisting on my right to appeal to the church at large will divide the church.

1. The Place of My Baptism: About three months after formally informing the Ann Arbor Church Board to surrender my right to be baptized in Ann Arbor, and as counseled, I believe the Lord answered our prayers (and those of many others) by guiding me as to where I should be baptized—namely a church outside of Michigan Conference and Lake Union, but which was closer to where I live. I chose the Columbus Ghanaian Church in Ohio.

The members and pastors of the Columbus Church knew me and, though separated by distance, had ministered to me during the period of my spiritual recovery. After notifying the Columbus Church of my decision to seek membership in their local church, the Columbus church, at a duly called business meeting, voted to accept me into its membership, subject to my baptism.

I want to emphasize again that the decision to seek baptism elsewhere (in Columbus) was consistent with provisions in the Church Manual (2010), which gives instructions on what is expected in the matter of reinstating members who had been previously removed from membership, and what to do where baptism is not possible in his previous church. It states:

“Such reinstatement should preferably be in the church from which the member was dismissed. However, when this is not possible, the church where the person is requesting reinstatement must seek information from the former church about the reasons for which the person was removed from membership” (p. 66).

As instructed by the Church Manual, Dr. Isaac B. Boateng, the Pastor of the Columbus
Ghanaian Church where I planned to be baptized, officially notified the Ann Arbor Church through its Church Clerk. But the Ann Arbor Pastor would not allow the church Board to see or act upon the official letter from Columbus. This prompted the Columbus Pastor to send two additional follow-up letters (See his letters to the Ann Arbor Church, dated April 26, May 6, and May 19, 2014; see also my own response letter of June 10, 2014, through the First Elder of the Ann Arbor Church. These are reproduced in the attachment to this letter titled “Final Steps to My Baptism in Columbus--Jan 30 to June 26”).

Again, for the record, the decision to accept me into its membership, pending my baptism, was taken by the Columbus Church at a duly-called business meeting—the highest authority in a local Seventh-day Adventist church. As the records will show, the Pastor of the Columbus Church duly notified the Ann Arbor church—three times—of its intention to accept me into its membership. He even offered to drive down to Ann Arbor for a meeting with the Ann Arbor pastor, elders, or the church board if it was deemed necessary.

Having fulfilled the spirit and letter of the requirements in the Church Manual, I was baptized and was joyfully received into the full fellowship of the Columbus Ghanaian Church in Ohio on the weekend of June 20 & 21, 2014 (six months after notifying the Ann Arbor Church Board of the surrender of my long-cherished desire to be baptized in the church that disciplined me three years earlier).

2. The Person Who Baptized Me: The Pastor I requested to baptize me was Pastor Dan Hall, a former Pastor of the Ann Arbor Church (but who currently pastors two churches in Georgia). I chose him to baptize me because he mentored me during our pioneering work of campus ministry at the University of Michigan. He is a godly Christian minister, well-known for his passion for soul-winning and for his commitment to racial integration and Christian education.

Moreover, having a former pastor of Ann Arbor baptize me was designed to assure some of the Ann Arbor members who were disillusioned by the politicization of my baptism. It was meant to reassure them that there are dedicated pastors in North America who were willing to do the biblical thing, instead of playing politics with the baptism of a repentant sinner.

Furthermore, having a Caucasian (White) to baptize me was designed to deflect criticisms from certain quarters in North America which felt strongly that racism was at play in the unprecedented manner in which I was being treated.
Additionally, having an American baptize me, instead of a Ghanaian Pastor, was intended to counter bigoted arguments that might be raised by my fault-finding critics that Africans have a lower standard of spiritual maturity than their American or Western counterparts.

3. The Date of My Baptism: Let me also state that even in the choice of the date for the baptism, I didn’t want to embarrass my local Ann church pastor. First, I didn’t make a public announcement of my baptism date. I only shared it with very few close friends and key members of the church board. This was my way of preventing many people from Ann Arbor from flocking to the baptism in Ohio.

Secondly, I settled for a date that coincided with Michigan Conference campmeeting, when many members of the Ann Arbor church would be at campmeeting. Once again this ensured that not many from Ann Arbor would come to Ohio, a situation that would have put the Ann Arbor Pastor in an awkward or embarrassing situation.

Nevertheless, it is significant to state that some members of the Ann Arbor church I had informed were present during the baptism weekend or sent their written well-wishes. Among these were:

- The First Elder (who was one of those assigned by the Board of Elders to be my “responsible officer” to work towards my reintegration back into God’s church—a task he diligently performed for two years);

- Dr. Raoul Dederen (a retired Dean of the Andrews Seminary and an Honorary Elder of the Church), who wrote a personal letter to the Columbus Pastor to be read to me publicly on the occasion of my baptism;

- the Church Treasurer, Communications Secretary, and some other members and Board members of the Ann Arbor church. They were there in their personal capacities, a subtle way of not embarrassing the local church pastor, even while letting the world know that the Ann Arbor church did not have a say in its pastor’s unilateral opposition to my baptism.
As further evidence that my decision to seek baptism in another church was not prompted by a rejection on the part of the Ann Arbor church, and to put on record the cordial relationship I had with my former church, after the baptism in Ohio on June 20, 2014, I duly informed the Ann Arbor Church, and thanked them for their support all these years. My wife and I also worshipped in the Ann Arbor Church the following week. This was the clearest way I could let the world know that there was no hostility between me and the Ann Arbor elders, church Board and members.

The above are the facts of my baptism. For the record, I’ve attached to this email, my official communications with the Ann Arbor Church Board from January 30 (when I notified them in writing that I had surrendered my right to be baptized in my former church) to June 26, 2014 (when I formerly informed them about the events of the baptismal weekend). The attachment is titled “Final Steps to My Baptism in Columbus—Jan 30 to June 26.”

Attempts to Delegitimize My Baptism

Though thousands around the world greeted my baptism with joy, the same individuals and ideological groups who had campaigned relentlessly against my being ever baptized—or if at all, after the 2015 GC session—began another campaign to delegitimize it.

1. Activities by My Adversaries: Within 48 hours of my baptism some of my personal and ideological adversaries, in their effort to discredit the baptism, began raising doubts and attacking anyone who played a role in my baptism.

In fact, one of my more well-known adversaries announced my baptism on a Facebook pro-women’s ordination site (called “I Support Ordination of Women in Adventism). After some mischaracterizations, she concluded:

“What are the implications for him now ‘legitimately’ (i.e. as an official SDA) traveling the globe and continuing to spreading anti-w.o.[women’s ordination] views? Only God knows...”
Her announcement really stirred up their group members of 6,000+ as they posted inflammatory comments everywhere on Facebook, including the old slanderous accusations, efforts to delegitimize my baptism, and attacks on the pastor and church that baptized me. Their members, together with others associated with liberal organizations like Spectrum and Adventist Today, have led in the attack. And, as is often the case with my name, the discussions of my baptism on their websites have attracted a lot to their sites.

Some of my adversaries also created a new website focused on me to promote their agenda. One of the articles there express their fears that I could transfer my membership to Ghana and be chosen as a GC delegate to foil their women’s ordination efforts. The article raises this rhetorical question:

“GC 2015 REPRESENTATIVE FROM GHANA? As an Seventh-day Adventist member, is Samuel Koranteng Pipim now eligible to be chosen by Ghana as a representative to the upcoming General Conference 2015 – at which women’s ordination will likely be addressed?”

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that ever since my baptism these individuals and groups have targeted all those who have welcome me as a bonafide Seventh-day Adventist. When they saw that their campaign was not yielding the desired results they began branding me as a “cult leader” who had sway over too many people in the church.

2. Statement by Michigan Conference.  My baptism in a different church and conference naturally raised questions about what was really behind my decision to seek baptism elsewhere. Apparently because of speculations about the role of politics, racism, and theology behind the continued delay of the baptism of a repentant sinner, the Michigan Conference issued an interesting statement to explain why my local church pastor was unwilling to baptize me in Ann Arbor (see, Michigan-Conf-Statement).

I want to believe that the statement is sincere. But I was saddened by the misrepresentation of the facts—either knowingly or unknowingly. I’m almost tempted to believe that the Conference Administrators were trying to obscure the truth of their own undue interference in our local Ann Arbor church through its pastor. Let me briefly respond to some of the factual oversights in their statement.
Contrary to their claims, I have never insisted on being rebaptized. I only requested in writing their reason for the baptismal limbo they had placed me, and (in the Must We Wait document) offered a theological critique to the "wait for several years" theology of baptism being urged upon the church by some Church Administrators.

The church elders in Ann Arbor who are familiar with the case know that it was they—the Administrators (together with some ideological interest groups)—who were behind the pressure on our pastor to not baptize me. It is their action which threatened to divide our church, as it pitted the elders against the pastor.

There’s also absolutely no truth in the Michigan Conference’s statement that the Pastor of the Columbus church was trying to create dissension in our church by bypassing the Ann Arbor church Pastor. That you may know the facts, I’ve included in the attachment to this letter the communications between Columbus church and Ann Arbor church prior to my baptism (see, the attachment “Final Steps to My Baptism in Columbus--Jan 30 to June 26”).

Contrary to claims by the Ann Arbor church Pastor and Conference Administration, at no time did the Ann Arbor elders, church board, or members refuse to baptize me. It was the church pastor who stood in the way. When it was clear that outside forces (including the Church Administration) were exerting tremendous pressure on the Pastor, I surrendered my right to be baptized in Ann Arbor church to avoid embarrassing the pastor and causing a division in the church. The fact that key leaders of the Ann Arbor church either traveled to Columbus for the baptismal weekend program or sent letters of well-wishes to be read publicly was clear message to the world that their church (the Ann Arbor) was not against my rebaptism. (I’ve included some of their letters in the attachment titled “Final Steps to My Baptism in Columbus--Jan 30 to June 26.”)

3. Concerns & Slander: The above mischaracterizations and doubts about my baptism, together with slander on the part of my accusers are the reasons why some have wondered about the truth concerning my spiritual failure and eventual restoration. Unfortunately many do not check the facts before attempting to pass judgment or discredit my baptism.

Meanwhile, I have been bombarded by those aware of the intricacies of the situation. These have repeatedly wondered: How much due diligence do people conduct into the details of my
baptism before they attempt to raise doubts, if not totally discredit it. Why don’t they check the facts from the Columbus Pastor—a respected pastor with splendid professional training and impeccable ministerial credentials? Do those raising doubts fully understand the theological implications of their objection to my baptism? Are they influenced by the slanderous accusations from my adversaries?

One question that has been repeatedly asked over the last two years is that if the accusations that my past moral failures are criminal acts as alleged by those who’d have been the first to haul me to jail, why haven’t they done so? If their claims are true, why the peculiar modus operandi of employing a media circus to persecute rather than through the laid-down justice system to prosecute?

The way these adversaries have operated in the past has been: (i) They plant false accusations as the basis to pressure church leaders to do their biddings; (ii) After they get the church leaders to act on their accusations, they then use the official actions of our church leaders to further justify their slander—claiming this time that they’re acting on the counsel of the church leaders.

From the facts I have shared, there is no justifiable reason for anyone to question my baptism in another church. Not only is the precedence enshrined in the *Church Manual*, but also the baptism was in response to my desire to honor the Lord and His Word—after a calculated attempt was made to politicize what is supposed to be a biblical, spiritual, and deeply personal decision.

**Conclusion**

I have gone to great lengths to set forth the facts concerning my baptism in the hope that when anyone asks to know why I elected to be baptized in another church, you will share this information with them.

As I conclude, allow me to state what my baptism means and what it is not:
1. My baptism simply means that I am now a full member of the body of Christ, just like any other baptized member of the Church worldwide. As a baptized Seventh-day Adventist member, I have the same rights and responsibilities as all others.

2. For anyone to question the legitimacy of my baptism is to relegate my baptism to a second-class status—a teaching that is foreign to the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, the *Church Manual*, and unprecedented in the church.

3. Similarly, to question the wisdom of the Columbus Church that voted at its business meeting to welcome me to membership—an action that is in harmony with the instructions in the *Church Manual*—is to suggest (without factual basis) that the action of the Columbus church was wrong. It also suggests that the action of its Pastor (Dr. I. B. Boateng, a man well-known for his integrity and spiritual maturity) was questionable. This, to put it mildly, would be unfair to them after the due diligence they exercised to comply with all known requirements.

4. Being baptized and restored into full membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not mean that I was being restored to my former work in denominational employment as a minister. In fact, I have made it very clear that, unless supernaturally and manifestly convicted otherwise, I will not accept any form of denominational employment. For the avoidance of doubt, I am gainfully employed and fully engaged in a work that gives me spiritual fulfillment and I am not at all desirous of being employed by the church—although I will continue to work closely with the Church to promote its Bible-based message and mission.

5. Because my baptism, just as that of any other member of the SDA church, doesn't mean that I am a denominational employee, it implies that I am not bound by service requests requirements that are expected for denominational employees, whenever invited to speak anywhere. As a bonafide lay member of the church, I can be invited to any church to teach or speak.

6. To raise doubts about my baptism, shroud it in suspicion, and cite it as reason to object to my active involvement in church life is very unfortunate and in conflict with the *Church Manual* that binds us all as members. Does this mean that, on account of my being baptized elsewhere, I cannot pray, speak, teach, preach, anywhere in the Church? If the doubts about my baptism are left to stand, it will seriously undermine my usefulness to God’s work anywhere...
in the world.

7. Discrediting my baptism has also lent credence to several online campaigns by those who seek to delegitimize my baptism as a way of silencing my witness. Theirs is a calculated effort to ensure that no one reads my books, listens to my sermons, quotes my works, etc. It is politically and ideologically driven; it has no biblical or Spirit of Prophecy validity.

As to the slanderous accusations by my adversaries, though I could address the issue legally, at the moment, following the counsel of E. G. White, I’ve chosen to ignore such libelous and agenda-driven propaganda:

“We may expect that false reports will circulate about us; but if we follow a straight course, if we remain indifferent to these things, others will also be indifferent. Let us leave to God the care of our reputation. ... Slander can be lived down by our manner of living; it is not lived down by words of indignation. Let our great anxiety be to act in the fear of God, and show by our conduct that these reports are false. No one can injure our character as much as ourselves. It is the weak trees and the tottering houses that need to be constantly propped. When we show ourselves so anxious to protect our reputation against attacks from the outside, we give the impression that it is not blameless before God, and that it needs therefore to be continually bolstered up
" (MS 24, 1887). {3BC 1160.9}

In short, it was never my intention to seek for a substandard membership status of the SDA church, an oxymoron that does not even exist in the first place. And I’m happy that the procedure followed before and during my baptism meet the acceptable standards of the Church and its teachings. By God’s grace, the negative responses by my critics since the event has also not dimmed the joy of the experience, or caused the warm reception of the Columbus church to wane.

For the rest of my life, my mandate is clear. I sinned greatly, and through God’s great mercy, I experienced God’s forgiving, transforming, and restorative grace. I cannot be silent about that, for there are many more who stand in need of the mercy of a forgiving God who is abundant in mercy and grace. Like the apostle Peter after his conversion, all repentant sinners are commissioned to “strengthen their brothers” (Luke 22:31, 32):
“Help those who have erred, by telling them of your experiences. Show how, when you made grave mistakes, patience, kindness, and helpfulness on the part of your fellow workers gave you courage and hope.” (Ministry of Healing, p. 494).

My prayer is that for as long as the Bible remains the sole authority of our teachings as a church, we will work towards the reintegration of repentant sinners, rather than seek to banish them. And that the Church Manual will remain our guiding precedent, however much we might disagree with the application of any of its clear provisions by any member. Let us hold one another up in prayer and support for our common mission, though working in different fields.

May the Lord keep us all faithful, to the very end.

Sincerely,

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD

Executive Director, EAGLESonline

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October 17, 2014

Attachment:
Final Steps to My Baptism in Columbus--Jan 30 to June 26”

(NOTE: In a follow-up email, I will send the “Must We Wait” and “Turn Off the Tap” documents.)