AS ONE OF OUR PUBLICATIONS, PIONEER OF THE MONTH BRINGS TO YOU FROM TIME TO TIME BRIEF ACCOUNTS OF SOME OF OUR FEMALE PIONEERS WHO HAD LABOURED IN GOD'S VINEYARD.

THIS MONTH, WE PRESENT A SERVANT OF GOD,
MADAM VIDA NORLEY MENSAH
Affectionately called
“Ellen White”
(September 17, 1949 – June 8, 2010)
EARLY LIFE: Vida Norley Mensah fondly called, Sister Vida, was born on September 17, 1949 to the family of E. Q. A. Mensah and Ma Miriam Mensah both of Asuboa in Akyem Oda, Ghana. Vida Mensah had a sister known as Madam Naomi Ayi. Vida lived with her cousins in Korle-Gonno until she moved to Kumasi with her own parents.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: Sister Vida Mensah had her Primary education at Asuboa, proceeded to Nanka Bruce Middle Mixed School, Korle-Gonno, Accra and Dekyemso Middle Mixed School, Kumasi respectively. She passed her Common Entrance Examination which offered her admission into Tema Secondary School, and then O.L.A. Girls Secondary School, for her Sixth Form Education. After Sixth Form, she furthered her education in Akrokerri Training College, Ashanti, for her Post Secondary Teacher’s Training course. Furthermore, Madam Vida gained admission into Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) now Babcock University in Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State where she obtained her Bachelor degree in Religion in 1989. In 1991, she enrolled for Master Degree in the same institution and completed the program in 1993. She also took a Diploma and Degree courses in Library Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon and ASWA respectively.

FAMILY LIFE: Madam Vida got married to her sweetheart, Pastor Nehemiah Andoh Mensah on August 27, 1997. Soon after their wedding, she accompanied her husband to Nigeria for the work of God. Their marriage was blessed with two sons namely: Samuel and Solomon.

WORK EXPERIENCE: At the completion of Sister Vida’s Teachers’ Training Course, her first job as a trained teacher was at Bobrase Primary School. She then taught in Kwadaso SDA Primary School, Kumasi, until she went to ASWA in Nigeria. In Nigeria, she was employed to teach at United High School, situated between Ikenne and Ilisan-Remo road. During this time, sister Vida got acquainted with the family of Dr. C. Ikonne which became a second home, source of inspiration and encouragement in her spiritual journey. Later on, she had a call to return to Ghana and continued her services as chaplain in Adventist Vocational Institute (AVI), Techiman. Ghana as the Chaplain. Madam Vida served as the Mid-West Ghana Mission (MGM) Women's Ministries Director. She was employed as a Lecturer and Head Librarian at the Valley View University in 1994 where she reached out to many souls and worked till her death.

As earlier discussed, her knowledge, degrees and passion for library services, gave her the enablement to add professionalism to the entire Valley View University library. Along with her staff, she significantly transformed the Walton Whaley Library into one that is increasingly able to meet the needs of its readers in the shortest turnaround time. She initiated all five branches of the library namely; Harold Lee, Techiman Campus, Accra City Campus, Education Departmental and the Business Department Libraries and also linked up the VVU library with others in the country. Her numerous contributions to the VVU library exposed her activities to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Leadership. As a result of this, she got her name enlisted in the merit list that year, and commended for her meritorious service to the church.
Furthermore, through her prayers and personal contacts, many Ghanaian and foreign church members lend in their supports in cash and kind for the development of the Valley View University Library. Sister Vida was a facilitator in the training of pastors, educators and contributed greatly to the development of the Theology and Religious Studies Department. Close to her departure from this world, she extended influences across the oceans via health programs on Radio (AWR) and Radio Universe. She served on several committees including, Religious Life, Standards and Policies, Research, Journal, Library, Planning and Networking and ICT. In all her undertakings, she always turns to God for help and power.

TESTIMONIES FROM FRIENDS AND MEMBERS: Though a woman, she was a ‘living Church manual’ and a ‘whole Bible Commentary’. Her in-depth knowledge of the Adventist doctrines helped the Church in many ways to overcome challenges. She did not just impact the Aburi SDA church members but the whole of Abiriw District of Seventh-day Adventist Church. She believed that the work of God must be done though the heaven falls, even when tired; she honoured every request from the church to minister to their hungry souls.

Through Sister Vida’s assistance, the Aburi Church can boast of a place of worship, chairs for the pulpit and keyboard for singing praises to the glory of God. She was always frank and truthful with people. To Elder and Mrs. Eric Addo, Sister Vida never turned her back on anybody’s need, and testified to the fact that she was indeed “Christ like” in her nature. The church always benefits from her wealth of experience, during Annual Camp-Meetings, Evangelistic Campaigns, Workshops, Seminars and other programs. Kaneshe SDA Church also benefited from her generosity. She offered her home for a place of worship to solve the church’s problem in that respect.

The great woman of value and virtue, Sister Vida, as earlier said, exercised her love for the work of God through her services to God in Nigeria, Ghana and all other places where she served. She was a committed Christian who ensured that issues concerning the church were resolved according to biblical recommendations. As the leader and later patron of Women's Ministries Department, she taught the women to be alive and gird the loins of their minds with their responsibilities as wives and mothers. She taught the youth to remember their Maker in their youthful days and to realize that they have been saved to serve. The entire members of the district benefited from her teachings in the areas of Health and Temperance, and Stewardship. Indeed, Mama Vida was a blessing and precious gift from the Lord to Seventh-day Adventist Church.

When contacted for any problem, her usual response was, ‘have you told God about it? Then she would pray with such a person. She cared for children and they were her priority. She counseled and trained them on the importance of keeping their body and environment clean. She always had the work of God at heart and lived by "thus said the Lord" which many today try to avoid. Sister Vida was part of the faithful few; whose lifestyle earned her the nickname ‘Ellen G. White’.
MERITORIOUS AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS: In Madam Vida’s life time, she received many awards and certificates of merits, some of which are as follows:

- Certificate of Appreciation for Faithful Service by Odobolu Branch Sabbath School of SDA Church, Ogun State, Nigeria.
- Certificate of Appreciation for dynamic contribution to church life by Adventist Seminary of West Africa.
- Certificate of Merit in appreciation of good effort and active involvement as member in propagation and promotion of the three angels' message and Christian love during the course of studies on the University of Ghana campus, Legon
- Certificate of Attendance at "Integration of Faith & Learning" organized at Valley View University by the Africa - Indian Ocean Division (AID) Education Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in September, 1998;
- Certificate of Recognition for long service, unique and valuable contribution to the overall development of Valley View University in May 2000 by the National Accreditation Board of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Ghana (NABSDACG);
- Certificate of Participation in a Workshop on "Tertiary Administration, Methodology and Assessment for Academic Staff of Valley View University" in August, 2006.

CONCLUSION: Through the grace of God, she loved all around her without discrimination. Her little light shined, even in the darkest night, so the world around her could see hope and rejoice. She was never satisfied with the common and ordinary ways of life rather; she lived to serve the Creator and humanity. Her services to God were motivated only by her desire to honour and glorify the Lord Christ Jesus. Her presence was cheering and comforting, her touch was gentle, tender, and healing; her words were encouraging, filled with hope and inspirations.
Sister Vida Mensah was a wise woman, a faithful wife, a loving mother, an obedient servant of the God, and a worthy Ambassador of Jesus Christ. She was a teacher, counselor, singer, and a disciplinarian. Vida Mensah lived everyday of her life as if she would not see the next day until she was called to rest on June 8, 2010. Her life was indeed an epitome of what the scriptures says in Ecclesiastes 9:10 “Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might; for [there is] no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”.

Finally, the summary of Vida’s story can be seen in what a staff of Valley View University said which presented V-I-D-A as

**V – Virtuous**

**I – Inspirational**

**D – Discipline and**

**A – Ambition**

**SOURCE:**
Mensah, Vida (2013). Biography was retrieved from Burial and Funeral Service program. Edited by Fagbe Abimbola O. (The former Research Assistant, Ellen G. White-SDA Research Centre, Babcock University), August, 2013.

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