

Oral History with Mawunyo Afua Peni

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SPEAKERS

Diane Livingston, Mawunyo Afua Peni

- D** Diane Livingston 00:06
I'm Diane Livingston, and I'm here with Mawunyo Afua Peni, and she lives in Adentan, Ghana, and I'm from Park City, Utah. Very happy to meet you and be here. It's October 23, 2020 and we are doing a zoom recording today. We're going to be talking about Mawunyo's early days growing up and her life today. Then we're going to be talking about religion and her experiences with COVID. First of all, I just wanted to get a verbal consent from you, Mawunyo to record this interview today.
- M** Mawunyo Afua Peni 00:46
Yes, I have given you my consent. Yes.
- D** Diane Livingston 00:48
Thank you very much. Usually, when we begin, we like to ask narrators some questions about childhood and growing up, because 50 years from now, when people listen to this tape, they'll want to know who you are, where you're coming from, so to speak, where you're born, where you grew up. Why don't you tell us your birthday and where you were born.
- M** Mawunyo Afua Peni 01:15

Okay, I was born on 30th, August 1985. And I was born in Accra, actually, but I come from Tsito. In the Volta Region. Yes. So that's where I come from. But basically, I grew up in Accra. And I speak our, the Ewe language, even though I didn't stay in Volta, but my parents forced us to learn so we know how to speak the Ewe language. So basically, that's how, and when I grew up, yes.

D

Diane Livingston 01:51

So you say you're you from that area? Is that because your parents are from there?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 01:59

Yes. Both parents are from Tsito. Both parents are Ewes Yes. Ewes.

D

Diane Livingston 02:06

Okay. Do you have any siblings?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 02:12

Yes, I have six siblings. So basically, we are seven. And I am the last born. They call me "baby last". Yes. [laughs] Yes. So I'm the last one of three boys, four girls.

D

Diane Livingston 02:34

So growing up, you must have had a an interesting life growing up as the baby of such a large family. Can you remember any stories that come to mind as you think of growing up?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 02:50

Well, I can't really remember vividly, but just aspects here and there. Growing up, oh, it was quite fun because if you have your siblings and being the last born too, you are, a bit pampered, a bit, but it I was fine. It was okay. I remember when I was sick. My brother carried me on his back to the hospital. It was fun being on his back! [laughs] Yes. Yes. And those times when I was sick, you normally get a lot of attention from your siblings, and your parents. If you need something they said, "Oh, yes, small. So, get it for her." So, I think growing up, being the last one is a bit, uh, fun. I don't, I didn't have much responsibilities. Yes. Most of the responsibilities were basically the elder, elderly, my big brothers and big sisters. But it was cool. It was cool. Growing up.

D

Diane Livingston 03:57

Did you enjoy education? Did you like school growing up?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 04:00

I remember those times. I think -- I went to Bernadette Soubirios School Grade -- that was in Dansoman where once we were staying in Dansoman. So that's why I went to Primary school. That's from Kindergarten to JSS [Junior Secondary School]. Oh, was a bit tough because at that time, my father's work was not so good. So, um, schooling was a bit tough sometimes. And sometimes you go to school, you don't have food to eat, because we're not supposed to be buying food. So we are supposed to cook from the house and send to school. At that time, things were not so financially well. So most of the time, sometimes, I go to school without food, but my friends were good. Sometimes they give me their food to eat. So, I think it was okay. I saw it as a phase in life, so, it was okay. From JSS, I went to OLA Senior High School. That's in Volta Region. That's where I met my friend, Mahana. And I did General Arts, So that's basically an elective maths. That was the main elective courses. Geography, Elective Maths, Government studies and Economics. Yes, those are the main electives. So after that, I went, I found myself at University of Ghana, where I majored in Sociology. Then, I think after that, I was able to do my national service. Then I got employed. I was employed with the current firm I am with and it's a building consultancy firm. We do a lot of building consultancy. So if you want to build your house, you just consult us. We will get you an architect who will get you some drawings and a quantity surveyor. We'll get you a contractor to build it from the beginning to the end. So, basically, growing up, with my education life, I think this way I got it. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 06:24

Thank you. Could you tell us about your service after university?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 06:40

Yeah, that was my National Service. Yes. I went with National Service. So that is a mandatory service. It's some how giving back to the society -- it is our corporate social responsibility giving back to the society as in service to the country because most, most of us, our fees were subsidized by the government. So you also need to work. They'll give you an allowance, but somehow you're also giving back to the government with the education they helped you with. So I did my national service with the Member of Parliament for Ho West Constituency. His name is Emmanuel Kawasi Bedzrah. So that's where I did my

service for a year. Yes. And so did you enjoy that work? (long pause) Uh, yes, I did enjoy it. I think that gave me the opportunity to learn much about my people and about my hometown. Because um, uh, because of, let's see my parents, they visit my hometown most often, but they didn't really take us along. So, service gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of family members from where I come from, and also be able to interact with a lot of people. Yes. So I enjoyed it. Because I got to know a lot of places I didn't know. But with the experience and because --the constituency is big -- so we had to move from town to town from village to village. So I got to know a lot of villages. And I got to know a lot of people from different villages. Yeah, it was interesting.

D

Diane Livingston 08:16

So are these villages small?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 08:39

I wouldn't say they are small. They are [pause], I think they are okay. It's not as big as, okay, I will say it's not as developed as Accra. But yeah, it's not as developed as Accra but they are okay, they have the basic amenities. And they are, they are doing well. They have schools, they have the basic things. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 09:10

Let's return just for a moment if you'd like to, to just talk about maybe things you liked to do as a little girl, any hobbies or, you know, did you have any friendships that you recall that you'd like to remember?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 09:29

[laughs] I think for hobbies, I like drawing. I like to draw. So basically, I like sketching, so most of the time I sketch. The last I remembered I sketched something. Yes. A friend of mine -- his birthday was I think 20 something in August. Yes. And I sent him, (chuckle), I drew something, I gave it to him because I didn't have money to give him as a birthday present. So I drew something for him. He was happy about it. Yes. So drawing, I like drawing and I like sketching. I think growing up, I reduced the rate at which I drew because now I don't really draw. I doodle around, but not like I'm drawing, no.

D

Diane Livingston 10:26

What kinds of things do you like to draw? Do you like to draw landscapes or people?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 10:35

I prefer drawing people. I prefer drawing people than landscape, uhhhh, not quite. I prefer to see that human being in the drawing [laughs] -- I try drawing the human being. Yes. Sometimes I just take a picture -- sometimes I don't draw the, the body shape well. But, it's okay. I just want to do it. It's not bad. It's not bad. I remember, yes. When I was in Senior High school, I was doing a bit of sports. So I think that was one of my hobbies. I run, normally 200 meters. Yeah, that's one. So, it's okay.

D

Diane Livingston 11:28

Did the school have a team for running? Or you just ran on your own? No, we had, we had inter-house. The school have houses, the students that belong to different houses. I belong to Agnes house. So we normally do inter-house competition. So we compete among ourselves. So when you compete and you're good, you're very good, you get opportunity to compete with others they call it intra-schools, but I didn't really take it that serious so, [pause] I think I competed once and I lost so I just stopped. [chuckles] [laughing together] You enjoyed it, it sounds like you had fun.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 12:20

Yeah! I enjoyed it and I actually, because its a girls' school, enjoy when we go for intra-schools like that and we, the ladies, we drum and we call it "Jama". As in, how like, which English name should I use, um, as in, you think, you think, "cheer yourself up". So we normally drum and sing and dance and be giving our support to those who are competing for the school. It's fun!

D

Diane Livingston 12:57

Sounds like cheerleading.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 12:59

Yeah, yeah, yeah cheerleading. Yes, but it's a bit different from you guys. We use drums and it's a bit different -- we don't do that girly stuff. No, no, no. We drum, we dance, we shake our bodies, that kind of thing. Yeah.

D

Diane Livingston 13:17

That sounds really fun! Yeah, and now is that something you always did growing up? Was

that something that you learned from growing up? The drumming and the singing?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 13:29

Oh, I think I learned that from, from Secondary school. Secondary School opened a lot of opportunities for me because, um, being with your parents you are under one roof and you are restrained in what you do. But Secondary School you are, on your summer, you're on your own. So, and we are just girls so we could do anything we want to. We're not feeling shy. I think that aspect, I was able to gain confidence in that aspect because we are just girls. Who are you shy of? There's no man for you to be shy of. So I think Secondary School helped a lot. That's how I knew a lot of people. That's how I was able to be able to talk. I don't really mind, but when we go for into inter-schools like this, because we are in a girls' school, we are able to "shi jamma", dance without really caring about the other schools who have their male counterpart we just happy ourselves. So, we are okay.

D

Diane Livingston 14:33

That sounds really fun!

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 14:36

Yeah!

D

Diane Livingston 14:41

Let's see. So, tell me about your religious life. You sound like you're quite a religious person now. Has it always been that way for you?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 14:57

My parents were, I would say, my parents very strict, but we are Christians and, being a Christian, we have our values we have to follow. So being a Christian, I don't think I can choose any other religion, but I believe in God. And, but I don't look down upon other people's religion. I think religion is a choice. So being a Christian is my choice. I grew up as a Christian, and I don't think it will change. It means I'm born (into the Christian religion). I have a choice to maybe choose to be in other religions, religions, but I am okay with being a Christian.

D Diane Livingston 15:39

And so did your parents take you to church when you were growing up?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 15:43

(pause) Yes! My parents made sure they took us to every service, then every Christmas service. Normally they already, they normally, have Sunday service and Wednesday service. We always have to go for those services, even though sometimes we don't want to go but because my father was strict, he acted assertive, we had no choice but to go. (chuckles) But it was fun! You have no choice but to go. But it was fun. It wasn't, I would say he forced us but it's like he trained us to be and to be Christians. And it helps. It helped us growing up. Because if we're not trained like that, I think certain things we wouldn't have overcome them if things came...like, I think it was okay. It was okay. He did well, my father did well, even though he was strict. But, I think being a Christian, it gives you certain boundaries. You're not supposed to overstep those boundaries. And that's helped us in our growing up. It shaped us to who we are now. So being a Christian helps us.

D Diane Livingston 17:04

So, you've told me a little bit about your father's stance. I'm wondering about your mother, was she as strict as your father?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 17:15

Oh, my mum was a bit flexible. (laughs) My mom was okay. But and bear, normally in Ghana, I mean, in African culture, the man is the head of the family and in Christian religion the man is the head of the family. But so basically, whatever my father says, we go according to it. So even though my mom sometimes, even though it's not good for her, she says something about it. But, basically, we mostly go with what my father says.

D Diane Livingston 17:50

Gotcha. So would you say that your mother is a religious person though? It sounds like she is? ... or no?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 18:08

Yeah, my mother's a religious person. Yes, she's, how will I say? She's an elder of the church. And we call it Presbyters. Yes, she's an elder of the church. Yes. So she helps in the

organization of the church. So she's much involved in church activities. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 18:31

Okay, so what is the name of the church that you grew up in? You said its Christian. Is there a certain name?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 18:39

Yes, (pause) I still attend the same church is called Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Yes. Yes. So your people just make it for short EP church.

D

Diane Livingston 18:53

Okay. And so you still go to the same church that you were grown up in. And are most of the same people still there?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 19:03

Yeah, most of the same people are there, but the old people are dead now. I think, yes, the old people are dead. But most of the young, as we are all growing, some will die. If it's our time we will go. So I think most people are still there. Yes. But some, that's when they get married, they, the ladies go to their husband's church. And some of them just left the church and went to go to another church. So that's a choice. So, yeah.

D

Diane Livingston 19:40

Do you find that your community, that you're from, Adentan, how, how big is that town? How many people do you think are in that town?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 20:06

It's part of Accra. But I attend church at Kanashie.

D

Diane Livingston 20:16

Oh! Okay. And is that very far from Adentan.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 20:21

Oh, yes, it's quite far. (chuckle) It's quite far. That's what I said, at first we were staying in Dansoman. So that was not far. But now it's a bit far. It's, let's say, because I drive, let's say 30 to 45 minutes drive to the church. So, on Sunday, yes, on Sundays I drive, let's say 30 to 45 minutes to the church. Yes. But when we were staying at Dansoman, it wasn't far. It was a short distance. But now it's a bit far from Adentan to Kanashie. Yes. But I still make it to church.

D

Diane Livingston 21:01

Sounds like you do! So, let's move on to the COVID. And just kind of think about, you know, a lot of people COVID has affected a lot of different people around the world. And many people are wondering how this is affecting people. One aspect of that is worship and faith, you know, and, and so maybe you could start with just telling us a little bit about what, church was like pre COVID. You know, you, you go to church on Sunday, you know, does everyone come there? What do you do? And then we can talk about - has anything changed from before to now? So, what was it like before?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 21:50

Before? Oh before, before the COVID. We were going to church but I wasn't, I will say I wasn't so regular because of the distance. I tried to make it every Sunday because of my mom's being alone. So before COVID, we go, most Sundays we go. But the week days, I wasn't able to go for the midweek services because of the distance. So Sundays, I made sure I go to church. But then the lockdown came, we're supposed to, everybody was supposed to be at home. So, I think the longest was about, I think maybe two weeks or something or three weeks, one of them. I don't remember. But the lockdown, they started online service. So online service helped a bit. It helped a bit, but it didn't really help so much. Because sometimes my internet network is not so good. So online service, then you'd be having this service, then it's being interrupted by a lot of other things. So, sometimes I do follow, sometimes I don't. And also, the truth, listeners is also part of it. [pause] Because this is an online service, we, sometimes I don't go online. Sometimes I do my own church in my house without following the online services. And sometimes, too, I just don't do anything. [pause] I just don't do anything. I just maybe that Sunday morning, I say thank you God. Then, I just do the activities of the day. So before COVID, it was better, but after COVID, because we're not going to church, we basically had to rely on online services. So it was a bit difficult saying that you're fully in church activities. But, it was okay! It was okay. But, now that they've opened, they've opened up church and, uh, it's good because at least you see a lot of people. At first online, see the pastor and just a few people. You only talk on the phone, say "hello", "hi". But now that it's opened, at least you

can see people because, see physical people! [chuckle] even though they're social distanced. Like, I know that all the persons is sitting by you, as compared to online. So before the covid it was better but after the covid, we are not trying to get back to normal church activities. So, I'll say to me personally, to my faith, uh, it has reduced a little. How I used to be committed, it has reduced as compared to now because the COVID, didn't give you the edge to go to, okay, there was no opportunity for you to go to church and everything. And so you just have to rely on your phone, doing online services. And if you don't have data, or if you don't have, if your internet is wrong, that means you won't be part of the service. And it was difficult to, let's say, for example, my mom. My mom is not computer inclined. And so that means that if I was not available, she was full of services, just being in the house. Just being in the house. So, I think that COVID affected our religious more. But I think we are getting back on track. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 25:49

Something that you said I thought was really interesting, and I've felt the same, and so it kind of stuck out to me is, you said that your faith kind of suffered because you weren't able to be there. And it just, it sounds like it wasn't quite the same with online. It just wasn't, it didn't meet maybe your needs, like the in-person did. Talk a little bit about why you think that is?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 26:19

Um, in-person you are in church. So you'll have a lot of distractions, you're all in church, you're all concentrating in maybe in between, and that kind of thing. But this one you are in the house, you are doing online. Something may come up. Someone will call you, "do this, do that". So it's what distracts you from concentrating on that period that is supposed to have been in church. So online, maybe I'm online right now, and someone calls me on the phone. I have to pick. But better my [physical] church, I just put, the phone will be on silence. I can't pick up. But because it's online, my phone is with me. [she references what she would say to herself in the moment] "Oh, pick it and talk". After talking before I go back to service so it distracts the service a bit. So you will, you're not having a, like, attention. Unless maybe you, yourself, you tell yourself, "Okay, it's time for church. I'll maybe use the online service and get off my phone. I will just concentrate. You have to be self-disciplined in that. But, I think if you're in church, the people become your watchdog - they discipline you in concentrating than you yourself. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 27:48

So one thing that I found, because we also were in home church, you know, home for a

while, and then we started going back and, um, it just being around the people that also believed, have faith, you know, it strengthened my faith too. Did you feel any of that?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 28:12

Yes, it's nice if you're talking to somebody, one-on-one. And you're able to, even though right now I'm speaking to you online, but it's a big difference if you are with the person. You can be able to, [pause], how the person acts in everything, you're able to understand it better than just talk to you on the phone. But the phone is just my voice. If I'm lying to you, you won't even know. But if I'm here with you, and I'm lying, my expression, and the way I move, you might know whether the person is lying or not lying. And it's best. It's warming to be talking to the person face to face and be fellowshipped. Fellowshipped together. Yes. That is, it's best. They're online, yeah, some way, and the person sees some way. You are trying to connect. But the connection is not coming. There's a problem. There's a problem. But, I was lucky.

D

Diane Livingston 29:20

You know, I really like the word you used - "warming". That really does, it kind of strikes me you know that and that kind of is a good word to- it's a picture word, I feel like and it kind of describes [Mawunyo laughs] what you're missing when you're just, you know, when you're not with actual people. So thank you, that's a great way to look at it. So do you feel like oh, okay, so let's, I'm just looking at some questions here. Um, let's see. So now that you're back to church, are there certain things that your church does to keep you safe? As far as, do you have to wear a mask? Are you socially distanced, separate pews or anything like that? What do they do?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 30:16

Yeah, before you entered the church premises, you have to wash your hands. You wash your hands, and you have to have your mask on. You wash your hands, then they accept your name, and they take your temperature. So after taking your temperature, yes, before you enter the church. And the seats are located so you have to sit at where they are located. So there's a distance between you sitting with somebody. So there's, I think they are practicing social distancing. But sometimes, sometimes if you miss someone, I bet you want to give the person a hug. It was like [laughs] it was like, even the person that has a mask --oh!--that's a problem, that's a bit of a problem, but we are managing the distance. So everybody sits to keep their social distance. Yes. Everybody's supposed to wear their masks. Then those who sing, they move their masks all right by the same distance.

D Diane Livingston 31:29
So do you, you do sing then? You do have singing?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 31:34
Oh, no, I don't sing. I think, I think my voice is no good. So I don't sing. [laughing]

D Diane Livingston 31:41
[laughing] But some people sing?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 31:44
Yeah, my friends sing. We sing. They sing. They're good. Yes. I am a member. Yes, I don't sing.

D Diane Livingston 31:56
Do they have a choir there?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 32:01
Yeah, we have a choir. We have, we have the choir, the rope and everything. I think we have three different choirs. We have the big choir, and we have, there's another choir, we call it a "Great Choir". That is basically made of matured people. I would say matured to be a bit older. They are old, but now that's where my mum is. That's a big group, she, she joined, she is in. But they are older. So I wouldn't want to be in there because I don't have my age [laughs] in that group, so I can't connect like that. Then we have the CYB. The CYB is a youth, is basically made of the youth. So they drum, dance. And yeah, so it's also a thing. So we have three main singing, singing choirs in the church. Then we have the band. The band, they sing charismatically, yes. Then that one, yes.

D Diane Livingston 33:13
So Has anything changed with COVID? In our church, we aren't really singing because they're afraid to have people like, you know, sing out and get germs around. So what is it for you, do the choirs and the band all -- they are singing?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 33:30

Yes, the choir sings, but they sing with their masks on.

D

Diane Livingston 33:34

Oh, okay.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 33:35

They sing, yes, they sing. So, basically, we are singing the hymn, they sing with their masks on and and their piano helps with their sound. So we sing, with the hymns we don't do the charismatic way. At first we used to have groups singing, singing, but now we don't have it. It's basically, the choir who sings hymns. Then we go along with it, the band. The band, as I said, they have social distance and there's a big gab so they have like two band people hold their mic, one is over here, one is over there. Then they sing for us, they play their band and we dance to it. Basically, but it has reduced. Pre-COVID, it was, it was charismatic! You could dance, you could shake your butt and everything. But now, it's not like that. It's like, you, you shake it small but the song is not that, you know, how will I say it, [she whispers] it is "Jorming" [a word normally used by Ghanaian youth to describe lively], like that. [she chuckles]. It's not, but it's okay. It's okay. I think it's a phase so we are going through the phase. You just have to manage reports we have now, when we find we are okay, we just have to manage with what we have now. So that precaution measures I think they are okay. They are fine. Yeah. They are good. They are good, but we have to...but...and also, now church time has reduced. It is basically maximum of two hours. Maximum of two hours you should finish church service. At first, yeah, at first we could, maybe when we have a long service, we can sit in and chat for hours.

D

Diane Livingston 35:23

Wow!

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 35:26

Yes! Ghana church, we, we are very religious. [laughs] We do a lot of...I'd say we do a lot of church activity because Sunday is a program. You have to do the programs are connected and sometimes you have Communion service. And that kind of...Now the Communion service, we, at first you pick it yourself. But now it's wrapped in, in, how do I say, in cups. Like, it's already manufactured straight up. So you pick it, you will sit at your, your seats, the Pastor will pray. You take your, their bread as in the Communion bread, from the package, the package and everything. They take it yourself-they. Pre-COVID, it is on the

altar. So you just pick it and drink it then. At first the Pastor gives you the Communion, you pick it. But now, it's not like that. You pick the package which already has the wine and bread, you just pick it. Then, you sit at your seats, and open the package you take in your Communion and your wine. So there's a difference. No.

D

Diane Livingston 36:38

So when you are a home church, then, were you able to take Communion? Before you went back to church?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 36:48

Yes, home church, I didn't have the normal wine and that kind of thing. So I manufactured my wine and manufactured my bread. I got biscuits as my bread and malt drink as my Communion wine. And I took it! [chuckles respectfully]

D

Diane Livingston 37:04

Ahhh...

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 37:04

I prayed on it and I took it! So that's okay. [laughs respectfully]

D

Diane Livingston 37:09

So do you have a special prayer that you pray on the Communion before you take it?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 37:18

Oh, basically, you just pray to God for your life as sinful to forgive you of your sins. Then you ask Him for any special request in the Communion. So it's basically individual, it's individual. Now, whatever you want, it's all good. It's all you. And it's extremely, the Communion signifies His Son, Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for your sins. So, it is just true that you can use that to communicate with God to tell him about -- sometimes people do that to tell him about your problems and that kind of thing, but it's individualistic. Yes, it's individual. It is you with your God.



Diane Livingston 38:07

Do you think that most of your friends did the same? Would you say most of the people that you know did the same and took Communion themselves at home?



Mawunyo Afua Peni 38:17

Oh, yes, most people, as I said it was online service. Most of the time, the online service the day before the day for the Communion, the Pastor will tell us that, "Oh, tomorrow is Communion service. Get something that signifies wine, get something that's signifies bread." So, you follow the service online. Then, they tell you to take the bread and they tell you to take the wine. Yes, so basically most people did the same thing. But when, maybe, you are not following online that means that if you're doing your own thing, that that's what I did. I didn't really ask people if that's what they did. But, I know my church members followed their online and we took Communion and we took bread. Yes.



Diane Livingston 39:06

That's interesting. Wonderful how we can be creative in the way we worship when we have to be, huh?



Mawunyo Afua Peni 39:14

Yes, this time has helped us to be innovative.



Diane Livingston 39:21

Let's see. Let me look down here at some other questions. We've already talked about how your faith and, and whether it was easier or harder to stay strong in the faith. Did you find yourself doing anything new to try and help with your faith during the time when you couldn't go to church?



Mawunyo Afua Peni 39:48

[pause] Uhhh, trying something new. I would say that during that time, I didn't... I'll say I was a bit lazy in it. I didn't do much. I realize that I was, really...before COVID we were going to church, you saw it as a commitment to go to church and everything. So you were helped. As the, as you go to church, you get people, you pray together and that kind of thing. But now, you are alone, you have to do it yourself. So, uh, I would say I was a bit lazy in that one, even though you do your individual praise, and that kind of thing. But uh, I'll

say listeners came in. I didn't...[she asked herself] how I was supposed to behave? Before COVID how I behaved before COVID and after COVID, there's a bit of some difference. Because how I used to pray, it had reduced. I didn't pray like how I used to. But I'm trying to get back to the level I was in at first before COVID. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 41:06

Do you find that it's difficult, proving difficult to get back to where it was? Or do you feel those stirring feelings that are helping you to come back to where you were?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 41:20

Oh, it's not, I won't say it's difficult. Because, now the church is opened, you, you are, going to church now. But, the COVID period, as the lockdown period, has made me identified my gaps for me to feel. That means that I was not dependent on myself to pray. I was dependent on others to push me to pray, which was, I think it's bad as a Christian, because you can't...worshiping God is individualistic, it is a choice YOU have to make. So it shouldn't depend on people even though you need to fellowship with people, but the MAIN thing is you have to do it yourself. So this helped me look at, made me able to identify my gaps. Yes, I'm working on it.

D

Diane Livingston 42:19

So in some ways, it sounds like maybe this has been a positive for you to be able to step back and ask yourself, "Am I really committed? Or is it just other people that are making me committed?" Would you say it's been kind of a positive?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 42:37

[long pause] Oh, it's positive! It's positive. Because at first I used to think I was pray awful, and I attend church and everything. But now I realize that you have to work on yourself. You have to, even though you have people, you have prayer partners, you have fellowship partners, BUT you also have to make it a commitment yourself to do things yourself without depending on people. Yeah, it's nice if you pray with people, they're also praying, it helps you not to stop moving and it helps you to continue and push on, but...uh being individual too, sometimes you have to sit in your corner and know that, yes, you need to pray alone to get your, your, your problems or you get your solutions to your problems. Yes. So, with this, it's somehow made me realize that I need to do more work on myself.

D Diane Livingston 43:41
Wow, that's, that IS positive. That's wonderful. I think, you know, I think there are probably are quite other few people that are in the same boat of, you know, trying to figure out what it is they own believe, they believe themselves. So and so that kind of answers the question I have here. Have you learned anything new that you want to keep with you? And I think you just answered that question. [Mawunyo laughs] If it isn't new, it's something you've come to at least, right? We're kind of nearing the end here. I just have a couple other things. Has there been anything that's surprised you about this whole experience with COVID and religion?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 44:28
[long pause] Surprised.

D Diane Livingston 44:31
Or something you didn't expect?

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 44:37
Ohhh! [pause] I won't say I was surprised, I'll say I was impressed. Because most people were not, for example, my church, now the elderly made it, they made it a point to be more inclined with the internet, the phone, because they didn't have a choice. At first, you are all going to church, you're meeting, but now, you can't really have that kind of fellowship without using the phone and using the internet. So right now, I think I'm impressed with how the elderly have embraced using the internet and using technology in communicating. Yes.

D Diane Livingston 45:21
That's interesting. Yeah, it kind of shows their faith, right? It seems like that they're, they're willing to do something new because they really want to be there.

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 45:30
Yes.

D Diane Livingston 45:32

And so do you have in your church, do you give people an option, if they still don't feel safe to come, or they have bad health? Do they record it and, and maybe livestream it or provide a recording for those who can't -- still can't -- come to church?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 45:53

(hmmm) Because of the lockdown affairs during..., there wasn't much movement. So at first, there was nothing like that. But those who are not able to join online and that kind of thing, the Pastor and the members visited them. But those who who were sick or old they didn't really go [get visited] because they didn't want to have much contact, maybe they might get COVID or something negative. But those who were okay, we are not able to visit them to find out if they needed something, because with the COVID and that kind of -- a lot of people's businesses came down. So they're finances were a bit down. So, this also was an avenue for the church to show their love. So, they went out to give help to those who needed it -- to those who needed it. So, I believe that was, it wasn't really a form of, I think it's also a form of church. Because you go to them, you pray with them, you listen to them. Then, you're able to give them some aid even when they need it. So aside from the online church, I think they, they visited on one-on-one, but they didn't visit there too much. Those were too old and couldn't have much health, who had a bit of health problems, they didn't want to put them in a corner to get them sick. They didn't leave their space. So, those who were a bit okay, they visited them. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 47:35

So do you think -- what a wonderful program! That's, that's fantastic. So do you think that that continues or now that church has started up...they, "Everyone's coming now, so they don't need to be visited." Is that kind of [pause], do they continue?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 47:51

Normally, [pause] because the COVID is still around, they, they don't really -- because church is opened, that means people have to come to church, so their visitation...at first we are visiting them all before COVID, we're visiting the elderly, but because of their COVID, it has reduced HOW they visit, because they don't want to put them into situations of they're getting more sick. I'll say for my church, they stopped their online, because the church is open. People have to come to church. Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 48:36

Right. Okay. Let's see. So, in just a final question. What would you leave as kind of your

parting thoughts to be remembered years down the road about this time during COVID? What would be something you would say to, you know, people who want to think about what, what it was like? I mean, we've talked a lot about it. Is there anything else that you would share. Anything anything else you feel like you've learned that I haven't asked about that you'd like to put in?

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 49:18

What, what can I say? I think that bad things happen. Pandemics happen. It doesn't happen often, once in a while, but ah, we all in our lives. And we just keep on, we just keep our faith going and just love each other and help each other too. I think that with this COVID has helped us to know that we need each other. We need to help each other because some people didn't have food because they were dependent on their businesses and COVID didn't help them. It's whether, but their business is down. So this COVID has, speaking personally, I think it has helped us and me to be able to know that yes, you need to give helping hands to people. You may think that person is rich now, but something happened and he doesn't have the money anymore. So you need to help because one day you can, you also be in the same situation. So I think this pandemic has taught us a great deal about love and faith.

D

Diane Livingston 50:42

Beautiful.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 50:43

That's what I can say.

D

Diane Livingston 50:44

Thank you so much, Mawanyo, beautiful.

M

Mawunyo Afua Peni 50:49

Yes.

D

Diane Livingston 50:50

Beautiful finish there. So, I just want to thank you so much for our time together. You've shared, you've opened your heart.

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 50:58
Oh, thank you.

D Diane Livingston 50:59
I think that [pause] I've learned things from hearing from you. And I know that this will be something that will be really wonderful for your family going down the road, you know be able to have and...

M Mawunyo Afua Peni 51:12
Yeah.

D Diane Livingston 51:12
know of your experiences with -- during this, you know, troubled time. And yet you have a real positive attitude about life and about good things that are being learned. That really shines through and I really appreciate it. So I will close the recording now and just again, thank you.