



# Child Protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba Municipality, Ghana

## Research Article

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## Abstract

Child abuse is a common phenomenon in Africa, and Ghana is no exception. Where child abuse exists, the appropriate response is child protection. Child protection involves policies, structures and practical steps to ensure children are safeguarded. The Church of Pentecost is one of the fastest-growing Church in Ghana, with a local congregation in almost every community. Winneba, a predominantly fishing community, is affected by several forms of child abuse – child labour, child prostitution, child neglect and trafficking. The Church has 37 local congregations across the length and breadth of the Winneba municipality. In recent times, churches have been recognized as strategic partners in child protection efforts in the communities which they serve. This paper examines the child protection ministry of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba in relation to insights from biblical and practical perspectives on child protection. The findings point to insufficient child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in Winneba. The current situation only views children in terms of God's salvific plan that includes children (conversion and sanctification). The paper posits that something far broader is required in the light of child abuse throughout the world and in Winneba. Consequently, certain recommendations are made to enable the churches to take more concrete measures to safeguard children.

## Keywords

child protection – child abuse – church – ministry – Ghana

## 1 Introduction

Child abuse is not uncommon in African societies.<sup>1</sup> Where child abuse exists, an urgent and appropriate response is child protection. UNICEF (2006) defines child protection as “preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse to children – including commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labour and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage”. Although UNICEF is a global actor, its ability to work in some countries, including Ghana, could be as a result of its continuous effort to contextualize and remain culturally relevant through extensive engagement with local stakeholders. The Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, iv) opines that “child protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect”. The policy further states that child protection has multiple players, such as children and youth, families, communities, government, civil society and private organizations. Consequently, all institutions, including churches, are called upon to institute measures to ensure that children are not harmed (Child and Family Welfare Policy 2014, 22). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 highlights child protection as one of the key areas, since violence against children continues to rise (United Nations, n.d.). Responding to and preventing violence against children is essential in the developmental efforts of societies. For this goal to be achieved, strategic partnership is envisaged with all stakeholders (SDG 17).

There are no adequate data on the extent of the problem of child abuse in spite of recent national surveys in several low- and middle-income countries (World Health Organization (WHO) 2014). Further, disparities in child protection are directly related to region or continent, geographical location, ethnicity, disability, gender and income (Van Rensburg 2013, 52). Also, the true extent of violence against children is impossible to measure. This is because much of it occurs in secret and is not reported (van Rensburg 2013, 53). Frequently, children facing or witnessing violence remain silent out of fear and the stigma attached to abuse; and many children accept violence because they view it as an inevitable part of life (UNICEF 2009, 24).

Even though the true situation regarding child abuse is not fully known, globally it is estimated that between 500 million and 1.5 billion children experience violence annually, resulting in many child victims experiencing long-standing

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1 Part of this work was first published in ET Kpalam and VE Light. 2020. *Our Children: the Place of Child Protection in the Church's Ministry*. Kinder Foundation: Accra, Ghana.

physical and mental health difficulties later in life (Innocenti Research Centre cited by Rensburg 2013, 53). Sadly, violence occurs at all socioeconomic levels. Also, many people are not aware that millions of children are at risk in different parts of the world, and that no child, whether rich or poor, urban or rural, is safe today (Jeyaraj cited in van Rensburg 2013, 25). For instance, in Ghana over 90% of children experience some form of abuse at home or in the school environment (UNICEF 2017).

Abuse can take various forms. It is often emotional abuse (sometimes referred to as psychological abuse). Such abuse can take many forms: neglect, terrorizing, humiliating, defaming, ostracizing and blackmailing (van Rensburg 2013, 80). There is physical abuse by bullies that includes poking, punching, shoving, hair-pulling, biting, stabbing, burning, strangling, suffocating and poisoning.

It is estimated globally that 23% of people reported being physically abused as children (WHO 2014). Verbal abuse includes persistent name-calling, teasing and gossiping; relational abuse is the deliberate exclusion from group activities; and sexual abuse includes sexual harassment and exhibitionism and more serious forms like rape (Rensburg 2013, 80). These are still on the increase in spite of efforts by governments and civil society organizations. WHO noted that global research estimates that 20% of women and 5–10% of men reported sexual abuse as children (WHO 2014).

In recent years, there is a growing interest in the strategic role churches can play in the development agenda of communities. The World Council of Churches' (WCC) conversation on the advocacy for the rights of children concluded that

the church is called to care for children in the community and the church by advocating for their rights in partnership with other organizations, by empowering them to stand up for their rights and by implementing policies and procedures to protect children (WCC 2017, 146).

Faith communities continue to be integral partners of UNICEF to champion children's rights and well-being. Prior to the inception of UNICEF, churches were significantly involved in the advocacy for vulnerable children (UNICEF 2012, iii; Garland and Chamiec-Case 2005, 22–43). In South Africa, Yates (2010, 168) contends that religious institutions make valuable contributions towards the welfare and the development of children. Similarly, in Malawi, Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager (2018, 31) recognize that faith leaders are strategic partners in child protection efforts in the communities in which they serve. In Ghana, the Child and Family Welfare Policy outlines that churches should

provide communication and education initiatives that promote positive family values; provide direct help to vulnerable families and serve as their advocates; provide care and support services to families, children and adolescents; and participate in national co-ordination activities to minimize duplication and enhance the establishment of complementary programmes, projects and activities (2014, 22).

There is limited data on the extent to which churches are playing this role.

Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager (2018, 31) further argue that faith communities can be effective, and in some cases take the frontline role due to their shared beliefs and practices that inform their ministry. This implies that faith communities are more likely to be effective in a ministry of child protection when it is deeply rooted in scripture or theological tradition. Is this the case for the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality? What does this Church do to protect children in her ministry? Brewster (2011, 82) believes that although churches are uniquely placed and equipped to address the needs of vulnerable children, their impact in this regard is minimal. This is because in many of these cases evangelism leading to conversion is seen as the churches' primary or exclusive function – it focuses on spiritual conversion and the future eternal kingdom.

The main aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is consistent with what is revealed in scripture and corroborated by social science. In this paper, the nature of child abuse in Ghana and Winneba is briefly discussed. An integrated theology approach is then employed to obtain insights from biblical and practical perspectives on child protection. The practical perspective involved a small-scale empirical survey into current practice of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba with regards to child protection.

### **1.1 Background and Context**

The Church of Pentecost was considered the largest Pentecostal Church in Ghana in 2006 (Pew Research Centre, 2006). With its headquarters in Ghana, it has external branches in 101 countries across the globe. The vision of the Church is to become a global Pentecostal church that is vibrant in church planting and evangelism. As a result, the Church has a presence in most communities in Ghana. The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost provides for a Children's Ministry, which comprises children (from birth to 12 years) and their teachers (volunteers who are trained to teach children the Scriptures) in the local congregation, with the main function of holding "Sunday morning

services to pray, fellowship and study the word of God” (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 91).

The Winneba municipality is located in the Central Region of Ghana. In the Church of Pentecost, a number of local congregations form a District. There are 37 local congregations across the length and breadth of Winneba, forming four Districts of the Church of Pentecost. Each of the four Districts in the Winneba municipality is headed by a pastor who is a full-time minister known as the “District Minister” (The Church of Pentecost 2016). In addition, each district has one lay leader assigned to oversee the activity of the Children’s Ministry referred to as the “District Children’s Ministry Leader” (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 96). With the Church of Pentecost doing ministry in every suburb of Winneba, it is imperative to investigate what the Church does to protect children in her ministry.

## 2 The Nature of Child Abuse in Ghana and Winneba

The Children’s Act of Ghana 1998 (Act 560) defines children as all persons below the age of 18. In addition, the Child and Family Welfare of Ghana Act (2014: iv) opines that “a child is one who is still largely dependent on an adult for the necessities of life”. This is to ensure that in addition to the legal definition, a child is conceptualized to be consistent with the Ghanaian family setting and concept of childhood. Child abuse is not uncommon in Ghanaian society. The realities of the situation of abuse of children have attracted the attention of both international and local organizations working to promote protection of children. It is reported that approximately 90% of children in Ghana have experienced some form of abuse (UNICEF 2018). This includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect. A significant amount of data on child abuse focus on sexual abuse.

A national survey by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) revealed that 6.3% of women and 5.3% of men reported they had engaged in sexual intercourse before the age of 15 (ISSER, 2011). This data is similar to an older national survey of 3,041 participants in which 6% indicated they had experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 (Pappoe and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 1998). Some studies have also focused on examining child sexual abuse among schoolchildren. A 2009 study conducted in selected schools by a non-governmental organization reported that 53% of sexual abuse cases occurred in the school environment, while 47% happened at home. The report further states that 67% of the victims of child sexual abuse are in senior

high school, 28% in junior high school and 5% in primary school (Plan Ghana 2009). Similarly, in a descriptive and exploratory survey, information collected from 490 schoolchildren, 116 parents and 49 head teachers from four out of the 110 districts in the country showed that the incidence of child sexual abuse in Ghanaian public schools was about 11.2% (Agu, Brown, Adamu-Issah and Duncan 2018, 122).

The staggering rate of child abuse in Ghana affects all cities, and the situation could be worse in rural communities such as Winneba (Development Action Association 2017, 7). Winneba, a predominantly fishing community, is affected by several forms of child abuse such as child labour, child prostitution, child neglect and trafficking (Challenging Heights 2018; Development Action Association 2017, 7). Similarly, Sasu, Asare and Ayensua (2015, 1) observed that it is normal practice in Winneba to see children employed in the fishing activities. Children as young as eight years old who should be in school are sold for usually a small amount of money of between 10 and 50 Ghanaian Cedis (USD 1.00–5.00) by their needy parents to be used as labour in the fishing industry. A recent comprehensive qualitative study by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) of Ghana on fishing communities revealed that many children between 10 and 18 years of age are directly or indirectly involved in child labour, and the worst forms often involve children engaged in fishing in Winneba (CHRAJ 2021, 33). The report concludes that child labour and trafficking are still a public health concern in Winneba. Additionally, Koomson and Abdulai (2021, 28) argue that child labour and trafficking is still a major problem in Winneba and its complex and multifactorial nature has rendered earlier interventions less effective.

### 3 The Biblical Perspective on Child Protection

Biblical perspectives involve the processes that aimed at the collection of biblical texts in order to understand the entire message of a book, a corpus, a whole testament or the canon as it was meant for its original hearers in their own context (Smith 2013: 137).

Child protection due to limited relevant texts was investigated under the umbrella of the more widespread shepherding paradigm in the canon. The concept of a shepherd is a common imagery in the Bible. A shepherd refers to a person who knows, feeds, seeks, rules and safeguards the flock (Ugwu and Okwor 2013, 50). It also refers to the one who “exercises pastoral functions to the people on behalf of God” (Stott 1992, 273).

The Old Testament revealed God as a good shepherd with regards to Israel (Gn 49:24; Num 27:17; Ps 28:9, 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; Isa 44:1; Mic 7:14; Jer 17:16). This relationship of God to his chosen people is most vividly revealed in his covenant with them. He demonstrated his love, protection and deliverance from the enemy. For instance, Jacob near the end of his life declared that God had been his shepherd all his life (Gen 48:15). David rejoiced that God was his loving, caring and protecting shepherd and therefore he lacked nothing (Ps 23). David's brave role protecting his father's flocks from danger (1 Sam 17:34–36) positioned him to understand the shepherding role of God in his life.

My exegetical findings with regards to Psalm 23:1 indicate that David expressed trust and confidence in, and thanksgiving to God, as a result of his experience of God's shepherding role. God was encountered as his protector, carer, guide and provider. Psalm 23 is all about God's providential care, guidance and protection throughout the vicissitudes of life and its joyful celebration in the community of God's people. However, it also places a responsibility on us towards the weak, needy and helpless among us (Craigie 1983, 204). The qualities of a caregiver (shepherd) espoused in Psalm 23 provide adequate guidance and motivation for the church to take up the shepherding role towards the weak and helpless.

This shepherding nature of God with reference to his people implied that they were to be competently and with integrity shepherded by their leaders (for example consider King David's commission in 2 Sam 5:2, 1 Chron 11:2 and Ps 78:70–72). Consequently, God was displeased and judgmental when Israel's leaders were uncaring and predatory shepherds (Ez 34:2, 11).

The portrait of God in the Old Testament as the shepherd of his people throws light on why Jesus, the Son of God in the flesh, manifested the supreme qualities of a good shepherd. The failing of the Old Testament shepherds and God's shepherding attributes unsurprisingly result in messianic promises of a Messiah (Zac.13:7; Isa 40:11; Ez 37:24; 34:23) who would fulfil God's heart for the faultless caring of his people (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 880). Smith (1988, 56) argues that Psalms 23 and 78 and many others connect the shepherding theme in David with Christ. Their falling short of God's ideals in this regard prepared the way for the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. He provides the perfect example of the shepherd's role.

With the gospels in the New Testament, it was observed that Christ described himself as the good shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14). Jesus sees himself as the good shepherd in contrast to the malevolent thief. During the time of Jesus, sheep were often considered weak, defenceless and unable to fend for themselves and therefore totally dependent on the shepherd. They were prone to wandering,

and were exposed to dangers such as heavy rainfall, robbers, rushing water from valleys, attacks by wolves, snow in the winter, and scorching sand during summer. Consequently, shepherds continually kept watch over them (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 1047). Even in the night, the good shepherd still kept watch over the sheepfold (Lk 2:8), making sure that the flock was not attacked by wild animals. This implied he endured uncomfortable conditions and even the possibility of losing his life in ensuring the well-being of the sheep. This could partly explain the rationale for Jesus stating that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

The shepherding ministry of Jesus was not only focused on adults, but also the vulnerable, including children. Christ displayed special attention to children, even in his busy, tight schedules. For instance, he entreated that we welcome, receive and accept children in his name (Mt 18:5). In addition, Christ gave a charge to us to ensure that not one child is harmed (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42). This implies no one is to place an obstacle to their faith, piety or happiness (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 928).

The shepherding ministry of Jesus to children is also seen in his great displeasure at his disciples rebuking the mothers for bringing their children to him to be prayed for and blessed (Mk 10:13–14; Mt 19:13–15; Lk 18: 15–16). This attitude of discrimination towards children was to immediately stop. It is important to note that Christ did not tolerate any form of abuse to children and made conscious efforts to prevent such abuses. Walvoord and Zuck (1983, 150) argue that these actions of Christ at the instances of ill treatment of children are also to set the pattern and pace for his followers.

The New Testament Christians manifested love, care and protection among themselves. For instance, Paul when describing his ministry among the Thessalonians stated, “but we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thes 2:7, ESV). This depicts the level of the apostle’s love for, and care of, the flock. It could be likened to how the hen surrounds her chicks, warming them in her bosom, and making sure they were adequately fed, and portrays the kind of affection a mother will show to the child at her breast (Carson, France, Motyer and Wenham 1998, 1281).

In summary, the biblical perspective has demonstrated that the canon presents one clear biblical understanding for caring for children. It is rooted, firstly, in the shepherd’s heart of God through Israel’s history. This was noted in God’s care for Israel and disappointment in her shepherds (leaders), his judgment on them. Secondly, it flowed from the prediction of a coming messiah-shepherd, who would perfectly model God’s love and care for his people, including the children, and who fulfilled this prophecy. Thirdly, the rest of the New Testament reinforces the need for the churches and the children to be shepherded in the



tradition of the “good shepherd”. In the church the vulnerable are to be protected, nurtured and have their needs supplied.

## 4 Practical Perspective on Child Protection

The practical perspective is concerned with the complex interaction between theory and practice. It involves an empirical study of some concrete situation in the Christian community and the underlying theory with the goal of informing, modifying, reforming or transforming it (Patterson and Woodward 2000:7). Smith (2013:146) also believes that practical perspective has its main purpose of transforming existing actions or situations through “informed strategic thinking” as well as “action planning”.

### 4.1 Methodology

In this small-scale study, a qualitative approach, with interviews as the method of data collection, was used. The aim of the study was to explore respondents’ understanding of child protection and the measures put in place to ensure children are safeguarded in the ministry of their local churches. In addition, the study investigated what strategic partnerships exist with relevant institutions tasked with child protection.

Each of the four District Ministers (all males) and the District Children Ministry Leaders (comprised of three females and one male) in Winneba were purposively selected for the study and agreed to participate. These eight leaders are strategically placed in the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba Municipality to provide relevant information with regards to the Church’s child protection efforts.

Separate face-to-face interviews were conducted with all the eight leaders. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the questions guiding the interview were given to participants to study and seek clarification where necessary. This was also to ensure that they were comfortable responding to all the questions. The main questions were: *how do you understand child protection; why should a church be concerned about child protection; what does your church do to protect children from abuse; what collaboration does your church foster with state agencies responsible for child protection in your communities; what recommendations do you have for your church with regards to child protection?*

Their responses were carefully noted and effectively analysed based on the five steps described by O’Connor and Gibson (2003, 64–90). The main focus was largely on the exploration of where the participants and their churches were with regards to promoting child protection.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

The section presents the analysis and discussions of the four pastors as well as the four ministry leaders. Tentative conclusions are also noted. It was observed that there were no significant differences in the responses of the pastors and the leaders of the children's ministry.

### 5.1 *Understanding of Child Protection*

All eight respondents demonstrated an appreciable concept of child protection. It was perceived as plans or measures put in place to protect children from abuses such as child labour, sexual abuse, trafficking and neglect. Also, that it entails securing a safe environment for children so that they can develop holistically. Two respondents felt that child protection has more to do with adults taking care of children in such a way that they can take advantage of the opportunities in their environment to become better persons in the future. This understanding is consistent with UNICEF (2006) and Save the Children (2013) positions on child protection. For instance, UNICEF (2006) considers child protection as "preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse to children". Also, the notion of the respondents on child protection agrees with that of the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, iv), which states that "child protection seeks to guarantee the right of all children to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect".

In addition, all the eight respondents' views also reflected the conclusions of the biblical perspective that Christian parents and churches are to foster a nurturing and protective environment for children (Bunge 2016, 98). They understand from Scripture that God is the shepherd of his people (Psalm 23), and Christ is the good shepherd of the Church (John 10:11). Further, they understand that this means every effort to safeguard and nourish the sheep is to be made. They also appreciated that these models of shepherding were to be followed by parents and church leaders. The understanding of the respondents supports a view of children that saw them as precious in God's sight and worthy of being nurtured in a loving, safe environment to become mature Christians and productive members of society (Kpalam and Light 2020, 41; Knoetze 2016, 238; Bush 2010).

The rationale for the church's involvement in child protection was also explored. It was noted that Ghana has laws that are against child abuse. They require institutions like the Church to take measures to ensure that children are safe (Agu et al. 2018, 126). Churches are also obligated to make information about suspected abuse of children available to state institutions so that they can act accordingly. Six respondents made reference to the fact that the Church

as an institution is expected by the state to be involved in child protection. This is consistent with the call on Churches in Ghana to institute measures to ensure the protection of children, and to act in the best interest of children (Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana 2014, 22). Similarly, Oladipo (2000, 148) argued that Churches are more of a community than social institutions. As a result, Churches should be concerned about every aspect of the lives of all its members.

However, it was noted that only one of the pastors and one of the ministry leaders made reference to the Bible as the basis for the Church's involvement in child protection whilst the other six did not make any reference to Scripture. Although no reference was made to a particular biblical text, two respondents indicated that God has given in his Word the mandate to his Church to protect the vulnerable in our society, especially children. This understanding is congruent with contributions from the biblical perspective. For example, Malherbe (2004) argued that God is the protector of children and expects his people to do nothing less than that. God commands the Church to protect vulnerable children among us (Exo 22:22; Deut. 24:20). In addition, God punishes leaders and nations that fail in this responsibility of protecting children (Exo 22:23; Mt. 18: 5–6).

## 5.2 *Measures of Child Protection*

With regards to the measures put in place by the Church at the moment, it was noted by all the respondents that special services are held on Sunday for children. These meetings are handled by volunteers, who are trained to share the word of God with children. It is believed that this programme on a weekly basis will empower the children to become responsible Christians and citizens. This is because the children do not only learn about the Christian faith, but also other life issues such as good moral conduct, academic improvement and how to live healthily.

In addition, it was reported that the Church practices, such as naming ceremonies and child dedications, contribute to child protection. The respondents opined that the naming gives the child recognition and identity. In the same vein, child dedication points to the fact that the child is accepted fully into the faith community, according to the Church's constitution (The Church of Pentecost 2016, 90). It was revealed that there were no specific measures that directly address child protection in the ministry of the Church. The situation regarding child protection in the Church of Pentecost in Winneba is inconsistent with provisions of the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana (2014, 22), which postulates that churches should “*provide communication and education initiatives that promote positive family values; provide direct help to vulnerable*

*families and serve as their advocates; provide care and support services to families, children and adolescents*". The inability of the Church of Pentecost to institute practical measures to respond to child abuse in Winneba falls short of the literature that suggest that in African communities churches are strategically placed to provide concrete measures of child protection such as public sensitization, listening to children and reporting abuse, providing counselling and guidance to children and their parents as well as providing homes for the rehabilitation of abused children (Jailobaeva, Daiconu, Ager and Eyber 2021, 95; Mghendi and Etukei 2019, 17; Eyber, Kachale, Shields and Ager 2018, 31; Ede and Kalu 2018, 46).

Furthermore, the findings show that there were no strategic alliances with state agencies that are involved in child protection such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service or the Department of Social Welfare. It became evident that although the pastors and the ministry leaders are aware of these agencies, the churches have limited knowledge as to what kinds of partnership can be forged. This could account for the lack of partnerships. It could be argued that this falls short of expectations of churches to "participate in national co-ordination activities to minimize duplication and enhance the establishment of complementary programmes, projects and activities" (Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana 2014:22). The involvement in national coordination efforts could contribute to strategic partnerships among churches and other agencies for child protection. There is evidence that partnerships between churches and national agencies are essential in addressing violence against children and also strengthening child protection systems at the national level (Jailobaeva, Daiconu, Ager and Eyber 2021, 96; Quarshie et al. 2021; Robinson and Hanmer 2014, 610).

In short, the results show that all the participants understood child protection as the plans, activities and structures put in place to safeguard children. Also, that the churches are key institutions that should be actively involved in child protection. Scripture was not cited as the main reason for the Church's need for participation in children protection. Another concern was that the churches relied entirely on church services with children, teaching the children the word of God, child naming and dedication ceremonies for contributing to child protection. In addition, there were no strategic alliances between the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality and state agencies that are tasked with the responsibility of child protection. Examining these findings in the light of the biblical perspectives and the entire literature showed a significant gap in the child protection efforts of the Church of Pentecost in Winneba.

## 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Generally, the findings point to insufficient practice of child protection in the Church of Pentecost congregations in the Winneba municipality. The current situation only views children in terms of God's salvific plan that includes children (conversion and sanctification). Clearly, something far broader is required in the light of child abuse in Winneba, Ghana and throughout the world.

Firstly, a major biblical teaching component ought to be adapted to the spiritual and intellectual levels of the Church of Pentecost in the Winneba municipality. This teaching and its practice should be included in ministerial formation as well as training of children ministry leaders. Secondly, the church should obtain information and statistics about child abuse and neglect worldwide, but especially in the Winneba municipality, and efforts to prevent same. Finally, guidelines are required by the Church of Pentecost on how to protect children in the Winneba municipality. This guideline should direct practical actions such as public sensitization, care and support for victims of abuse, reporting/disclosure of abuse as well as strategic partnerships with relevant agencies in the child protection efforts.

It is therefore recommended that further research focuses on developing contextual practice of child protection as well as factors influencing churches' child protection efforts.

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