

The Rev Canon Sr Rosina Ampah, OSH December 30, 1941 – April 8, 2026



Rosina Rhoda Araba Ampah was born on December 30, 1941, in Tarkwa, in the Western Region of Ghana, at a place called Jerusalem Hills. She was the fourth child and the third girl of her family. Her parents were from Saltpond, a coastal town in Ghana. Her father was a teacher, a choirmaster/organist, and a catechist of the Anglican Church. Her mother was a trader. Rosina was baptized in her early years and confirmed when she was about fifteen years old.

As a young child Rosina was known for her boldness, sense of humor, mischief. At age four, she was taken to the Anglican Mission House when her father fell ill. It was here, at age five, that she heard the voice of God telling her she would be an Anglican priest. When she told the story to the headmaster, he told her it was impossible.

Though it was meant to be temporary, she remained at the mission house until age twelve. As she grew, she became athletic, outspoken, and

boisterous. Later she bragged that she “climbed the tallest trees, scrambled over walls and fought the toughest boys who said she could not compete with them.” Rosina occasionally got into fights at school, especially if she thought another child was impinging on her rights or playing unfairly. Her audaciousness, resilience, and sense of advocacy would later become primary aspects of her life and ministry.

Upon returning to live with her family in Saltpond, Rosina participated in her family's baking business and developed skills in multiple aspects of the business including purchasing supplies, baking and selling. This experience would serve her well on multiple occasions in her adult life.

At 18, Rosina married, and her son, Eric, was born three years later. The marriage and extended family dynamics were difficult due to tribal prejudices, and Rosina ended the marriage in 1969. Returning to her hometown of Saltpond in the early 1970s, Rosina became active in the Anglican Church.

She was chosen by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to attend the Leadership Institute, where she led 13 girls from the Saltpond area. She then represented the TUC at the First World Trade Fair in Ghana.

During this time, she met



a seminarian who encouraged her to explore vocation as a religious sister since vocation to the priesthood remained impossible for Ghanaian women at that time. He recommended that she inquire with The Order of Saint Helena (OSH). Later, she discovered her brother, also a seminarian at the time, knew the man. They told her, "Trade becoming a priest to become a nun and God will be happy with that."

On Dec 25, 1978, Rosina arrived in the US to begin her new life in OSH. She was just a few days shy of her 37th birthday and was surprised and fascinated by her first experience of snow.

Rosina's ministry in OSH began with children's Christian education through parish retreats, Vacation Bible School programs, church camps and Sunday school. Many children benefitted from her gift for storytelling. She was soon hired as the Christian Educator at St Philip's Episcopal Church in Harlem where she developed a program, "Teaching Teachers to Teach," training adults as Sunday school teachers. While at St Philip's, she helped to lead 20 people on pilgrimage to Ghana, Senegal, Kenya.

In the early 1980s, Rosina facilitated a retreat at St Thomas Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, which later led to establishing a children's choir and a long relationship with that church. She also helped orient Cambodian families newly arrived in the US. Rosina taught the children stories and songs while their mothers learned English. Meanwhile, she was also traveling across the country leading retreats, storytelling, preaching and teaching adults and children. She traveled many places with Ocean Springs, Mississippi (1982-2002); Seattle; and Florida among her favorites.

Rosina made her first vow in OSH on July 11, 1981 and her life profession on July 18, 1983. A year prior to life profession, Rosina began preparing herself to follow God's call to the priesthood by passing the GED.

In 1984 the bishop of The Anglican Diocese of Cape Coast, Ghana extended an invitation for two Saint Helena sisters to come work in the diocese. Rosina served as the Diocesan Christian Educator, traveling with the bishop providing spiritual care and Christian education to parishes.

She also provided pastoral and formation training at St Nicholas Seminary (Anglican) in Cape Coast.

Tragically, Rosina's son, Eric, was killed in 1985. She was devastated and wrestled with God in her grief for many years. The two sisters returned to the US not long after Eric's death, as had previously been planned.

In 1988, Rosina traveled to Kumasi, Ghana with the possibility of beginning a new convent there. While a new community of sisters did not materialize, Rosina established the St Teresa Sewing Center in Kumasi, with the assistance of grant money from Trinity Church Wall Street. The sewing center made clerical shirts, cassocks, copes and cinctures, supplying clerical clothing throughout Ghana. The women and girls who went through the training are still benefiting financially today. In addition to managing the center, Rosina provided spiritual and pastoral care for the church in the Diocese of Kumasi.

Prior to her work in Kumasi, Rosina had begun college classes at The College of New Rochelle and after her return to New York, she received her bachelor's degree in 1990. She went on to attend seminary at New York Theological Seminary, completing her Anglican studies at General Theological Seminary. Sponsored by St Philip's Episcopal Church, Harlem NY, she became the first Ghanaian woman to be ordained to the transitional diaconate on June 12, 1993 and to the priesthood on December 11, 1993.

Rosina wrote the following: "During my ordination to the priesthood, as I was kneeling with the bishop's hands on my head, surrounded by the priests, I saw my life in front of me like a puzzle laid out in places and as the ordination happened all the pieces came together, and I could pick it up in my hand. So, I came to the realization that the ordination was the center piece of my life, and my life would never have been completed without it." At age 51, after 46 years of waiting, a doubtful call to a five-year-old in Ghana was finally fulfilled!

Rosina served as assistant priest at St John's Episcopal Church in Hempstead NY until 1995 when she moved to the Augusta GA house. From there, she served as a supply priest for



Sr Rosina made her life vow with OSH on July 18, 1983.



Sr Rosina in the Twer Nyame Mission House chapel with a group of Ghanaian associates including her brother, The Very Reverend Emmanuel Williams.



A dream come true! – Sr Rosina was ordained as an Episcopal priest on December 11, 1993 in St Philip's Episcopal Church, Harlem NY. She was the first Ghanaian woman to be ordained!



Srs Carol Andrew and Rosina alternated Sundays for 15 years as supply priests for The Episcopal Church of St Mary Magdalene in Louisville GA.

The Episcopal Church of St Mary Magdalene in Louisville GA for 15 years.

In 1998, by way of a brother from Holy Cross Monastery, she received an invitation to be a chaplain for the Lambeth Conference hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. There she had the opportunity to meet Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip at Buckingham Palace. She led a meditation for the bishops gathered at Lambeth and, along with the other chaplains, met with the archbishop.

Around 2000, Rosina had the Twer Nyame Mission house built in Saltpond, Ghana. The house included a chapel, christened The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Her plan was to train young girls who were interested in the possibility of religious life. This did not happen; however, the chapel continues to host a congregation of local people, and many OSH associates have been received there. Currently, we have approximately 400 Ghanaian associates!

In 2007, Rosina was recruited to a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) supervisory training program at The College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy in New York. She was asked to take Indigenous CPE to Ghana. With the Dean of St Nicholas Seminary and the Bishop of Cape Coast at her side, she convinced the CEO of Cape Coast Teaching Hospital to accept the training program at the hospital and then recruited participants from Ghana and surrounding countries.

Rosina worked for six years building the program and, in that time, trained 11 chaplains for work in



Sr Rosina helped found the Indigenous Clinical Pastoral Education program at Cape Coast Teaching Hospital in Ghana. She is shown here in 2012 with three graduates of the program.

West Africa. Utilizing Zoom and WhatsApp, she continued to work as a supervisor and advisor to the program after she returned home to the US. In the last six years, she was deeply committed to a weekly meeting of chaplains from across the US, who offered comfort, support and prayers for each other through the period of the pandemic and beyond.

Rosina drew much of her strength from a strong spirituality and deep prayer life developed over time from childhood forward. She possessed gifts of revelation, prayer, and healing and made them available to anyone who needed them. She nurtured many through her spiritual direction practice, as well as through love and friendship.

Rosina also engaged in ministry with and for the Saint Helena community, serving in various roles of leadership and formation, welcoming guests, nurturing associates and preaching in the convent chapel. After her ordination, she took her turn presiding in the chapel rota. Sisters fondly remember her cooking – bread, goat and jollof rice, fufu, pepper soup, and “country chop” made from piles of collard greens she would slice razor thin with a large knife. She was a stalwart of



Sr Rosina presiding at Eucharist with Sr Faith Anthony assisting as server. Photo taken in the North Augusta convent chapel in 2016.

Rosina enjoyed baking. She is pictured here in the former Augusta convent kitchen in 2008. She made raisin bread which we gifted to associates, neighbors and other friends.





In June 2014, OSH Associate Melissa Senf visited Rosina in Ghana. Melissa describes her stay as the “trip of a lifetime,” visiting many sites including the first Anglican Church built in Africa and the Cape Coast Castle where slaves were held before shipment to the Americas.

prayer and wisdom for individual sisters as well as for the whole community.

Rosina also provided loving support to her own family. When she was not in Ghana, they communicated through letters, phone calls and WhatsApp. After the death of her son, Eric, she filled the void by spiritually adopting many young men and women as her sons and daughters. Preaching at her memorial service in the chapel in Saltpond, The Rt Rev Victor Reginald Atta-Baffoe recounted how Rosina took him in as an adopted son, and he praised the role she played in his life. “Rosina was present at my graduations at Cambridge, Massachusetts and Yale. Over 30 years of our relationship, she played the role any African woman would for a son.”

Throughout her life, Rosina endured multiple layers of discrimination—tribal, gender, and racial, both in Ghana and in the US. There were occasions in the US when sisters or others were with her and stood in solidarity and support with

her. On other occasions, Rosina stood up for herself, including once telling a church full of people that “You asked for a sister; you didn’t say what color!” The retreat was well-received, and she was invited back the following year. Years later she met their new rector at a church convention—and he was black. She took some credit for that!

Gender discrimination proved to be one of her most persistent challenges as she repeatedly faced rejection from those who dismissed or actively resisted her call to holy orders. She lamented these barriers, not only because they delayed her vocation but because they reflected a broader refusal within parts of the Church to recognize women’s God-given gifts for ordained ministry.

She did not merely endure discrimination—she confronted and overcame it. Over time, she witnessed tangible signs of change: the ordination of women in Ghana, her own recognition as a canon of Christ Church Cathedral in the Diocese of Cape Coast, as well as multiple changes in The Episcopal Church and in parishes and individuals she encountered.

Physically, Rosina battled numerous health issues for many years, and the cumulative effects took a significant toll in the last years of her life. Crocheting cinctures and caring for her plants held many of her prayers in this time. In the weeks leading up to Easter 2026, she became seriously ill. As prayer, medication, and care intensified, she sensed that her earthly pilgrimage was drawing to a close. She requested hospice care at home so that she could die peacefully, in her room, before the altar where she had prayed for so many years. She joined the saints triumphant on April 8, 2026.*



For years, Rosina crocheted cinctures and prayed with every stitch. Untold miles of cinctures and untold numbers of people prayed for.



Each time the sisters exit the chapel, we pass Rosina's window of orchids and think fondly of her.



Often in Rosina's travels, she told Bible stories and led Sunday school classes for children and adults. She was known far and wide - from Georgia to Washington state - as a great storyteller. Rosina published some of these stories in two books available in the convent gift shop.

**Information for this article was collected from OSH archives, Sr Rosina's own writings, multiple family members, and *Beyond Male Altars: The Story of Ghana's First Female Anglican Priest* (submitted for publication in *The Journal of African Christian Biography* by The Rev Frank Entsi Williams, Sr Rosina's nephew.)*



*THANK YOU to all who contributed funds toward the planting of new trees
in places left bare by Hurricane Helene in 2024.
As you can see, the trees are taking well to their new home!*

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WE WELCOME YOU TO BETHANY GUEST HOUSE!

The convent guest house is open two weekends each month, one covering Friday through Sunday and one encompassing Wednesday through Sunday.

Our guest house features eight single rooms, each equipped with a private bathroom and individual temperature control. Guests have access to a fully equipped kitchen, along with Wi-Fi throughout the guest house and the main convent building.

Our guest house and convent are spaces of intentional silence, allowing space for the Holy Spirit to speak. If silence feels unfamiliar, know you are supported—our staff is here for you, the sisters are praying for you, and God is near.

2026 DATES

August 21-23
September 2-6
September 18-20
October 16-18

November 4-8
November 20-22
December 2-6
December 18-20

CONVENT OF SAINT HELENA

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