

Dear Friends,

This year's Graduation ceremony at our Akrampa School, which was July 11th, signals the end of one academic year (2017/2018) in Ghana and the preparation for accepting new Kindergarten pupils into Kindergarten 1. The Junior High students who sat for the B.E.C.E. (Basic Education Certificate Examination) along with their parents, teachers and fellow students are anxiously waiting for their results which will determine whether they passed or not. There were seventeen students presented for this year's B.E.C.E. and we are fervently praying for these seventeen to pass with excellent results.

As I mentioned, last year's students scored a hundred percent (100%) in the B.E.C.E., and I have been told that all eleven students got places in the secondary schools. The government of Ghana introduced free education for all students entering the Senior Secondary School at the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade. All that is required of the parents of these students is to provide for their clothing, buy them the basic textbooks plus their upkeep money. Now, because most of the parents in Akrampa can barely afford to maintain their homes, it is a real challenge to support their children in the secondary schools that have boarding facilities. All of last year's graduates accepted admission into 'Day' Secondary Schools.

Now the main subject for this article is an update about the School Meal (Feeding) Project, or what we call the 'breakfast program'. This has now been going on for 10 years and has become the main reason for the growth of the Akrampa School. We are the only school in the catchment area that provides a meal for its students!

Over the last five years, prior to the junior high school having been added to the compound, we were giving breakfast to the barely 60 pupils, one meal a day. Since 2014, when the school population changed and started growing because of the junior high school numbers, our effort to sustain 5 meals a week became almost impossible. We could only give 3 meals a week for the same amount of money that was being sent. In the last three years the total school population has almost doubled, to 345, which includes 20 teachers. This figure is expected to change again when school resumes in September for the 2018/2019 academic year and our numbers could hit the 400's! And let me pause here to Praise God!! Prior to 1994, before we began this mission together, there was NO school in Akrampa! Now, in 2018, close to 400 students from Kindergarten to 9th grade will receive an education, food, and the truth about Jesus!

The project was originally designed to feed only the K- 6th students in the Primary School, but how could we feed them and not give those in the grades 7 through 9th? They are on the same compound and taught by the same teachers.

In the beginning of 2018 Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church gave a very generous monetary gift to the Ghana Breakfast Program. And we want to again extend our thanks to them! This gift has allowed us to provide 4 meals a week of high quality and quantity. So for the past few months the children have been given 4 meals a week. What a wonderful blessing. But in reality, as the population of the school increases, we will need the financial donations to increase each month just to cover possibly 3 meals a week, but hopefully 4 meals.

We serve the following types of meals. There are meals with rice as the basic: (1) rice porridge with biscuits and milk, and (2) rice with sauce/gravy. There is a (3rd) meal that has beans, farina with red (palm oil) sauce. This incidentally is the favorite meal of the entire school because it fills them up, and for that reason it is served mainly on Wednesdays when we have School Worship. Also, on the days where we go out to join the other community-based schools in games and sporting events. The (4<sup>th</sup>) meal is corn porridge and served with biscuits and milk.

The breakfast program, as I have have stressed again and again, continues to be the reason for the increase in the population of the school. It is making the children look healthier and be more focused on school work. I can say with every conviction that the meal the children get in school is the most substantial that many of the children get for the whole day. Every day when a meal is served, we find some little children not enrolled in the school coming with their bowls to be given some of the food; some as young as two years. The parents deliberately make them come and we are having emotional difficulties in sending them away. On one occasion we had about twenty little children standing in the queue waiting for their share. Sometimes we find it compelling to serve these toddlers first, before we give to the regular students. We believe it's more than our Christian duty to do such a thing, a real responsibility to not allow these tiny children to go hungry.

I take this opportunity to thank those who are giving for this project, which is a real blessing to these "Little Lambs". This is how one of the principal sponsors of this project (who has given substantially and continuously for the last five years) describes the children. They are, to him and his wife, the "Lambs" that the Lord Jesus Christ says we should feed. I am personally grateful to them and to all of you! Thank you to Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church for their generous first time gift. We pray that Bethesda would like to partner with us long-term in this program.

The impact the breakfast program is making in the lives of these children, their homes and parents is so immense. It is my prayer that we will continue to sustain this for a long time.

Shalom,  
Pastor Ben