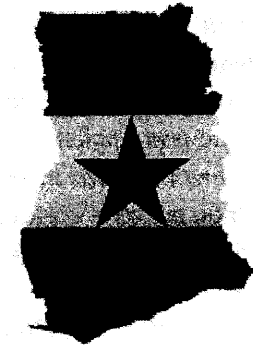


Thank You, Akrampa Graduations & Other Matters

Dear Friends,

Thank you



I would like to begin this letter with praise to our Lord Jesus, and a thank you to Bethesda on the Bay. Thank you, Jesus, for sustaining our mission in Akrampa for all these years. Through good and bad times, you are always there! Thank you, Jesus, for creating an interest and love for our mission in Pastor Angela and Bethesda. And thank you Bethesda on the Bay for choosing to come alongside our mission and help us in such a wonderful way. This summer, Bethesda has donated another very generous amount of money to the Ghana Meal (breakfast) Fund! This is Bethesda's second year of donating to help feed the students in Akrampa. Thank you!

Akrampa Graduations

Summer of 2019 marks the third class of graduating students from the Akrampa Junior High School. These are students that are graduating from the 9th grade, who will go on to take a national test to gain admittance to Senior High School (10th -12th grade.)

Our first graduating class was in 2017. Before 2014, our Akrampa School was only kindergarten through primary (grade 6). Until 2014, the Akrampa school only had two blocks of buildings each with three classrooms. There is however, an office for the head teacher attached to one of the buildings. These were built by FLC. Prior to that, we had nowhere on our compound for the students to continue to the next level. A Junior High School required building a separate block with its own set of classrooms for the three stages of the Junior High School (7th-9th grade). The village of Akrampa couldn't provide this, and without help from FLC this was out of the question.

In the past, when the children finished the 6th grade, they had to walk around 6km (over 3 & 1/2 miles) into the main town to be enrolled into a junior high school. The very few who have relatives elsewhere, would take the children to be with them, in the bigger towns. The rest of the students only had the option to attend in the junior high school in the closest town, 6km away. This came with the risks of getting hit by speeding cars along the highway and walking in many different weather conditions during the school year.

There is only one way to walk from Akrampa to the nearest town with a junior high, and that is to walk along the highway that runs east to west from the capital town, Accra. Sadly, there have been instances of such accidents with two being fatal. This led to the contacts and appeals to the government to build a junior high school in Akrampa, to be renewed with all fervency. Thank God, these appeals were heard by the Ghanaian government. And finally, they built the addition of a block for the three-year program for junior high school, that started in the 2014/2015 academic year. Now Akrampa students can go to school from Kindergarten through 9th grade in the safety of their village.

The first class of 9th grade graduates was only seven students comprised of four boys and three girls, in 2017. The second class for the 2017/2018 academic year was a total of seventeen students, which was comprised of fourteen boys and three girls.

This year's third graduating class has twenty-three students for the 2018/2019 academic year, for whom a graduation ceremony was held on July 24, 2019. Our 2019 class is comprised of ten girls and thirteen boys. This third class has improved by almost 300 hundred percent the number of girls in the graduating class. All

over the country the government is encouraging girl-child education, but it appears that in many homes, the view of some parents is that the girl-child is only to be prepared (at home) to become a wife, mother and to maintain the home. In the past, and still for some presently, it is felt that the girls didn't require knowledge of arithmetic and English to grow up to be wives and mothers. Continuous interaction with the parents in the community has resulted in this significant increase in girls attending school. Please add to your prayer list that Akrampa parents continue to see the value in education for their daughters, regardless of what those girls would like to become as adults.

Under normal circumstances, the population in most Ghanaian public-school classrooms is thirty students. One can therefore see that our Akrampa school is steadily becoming popular in the community with the increase in student population. From my perspective, this is basically the result of two things: the meal (breakfast) program, and the hard work the teachers are doing, resulting in good performance in the national examinations. This information- performance at national examinations, from a hitherto 'unknown' school- is making parents and guardians in the community realize that Akrampa is no longer the backdrop of civilization but a reality in the provision of competitive education.

Other Matters

After graduation, then what?

Graduation from 9th grade, is not the end of their education journey. When the children complete this level, those who have the requisite pass to enter senior high school, and depending on the availability and source of funding, would be placed in the secondary school (senior high school) of their choice.

The secondary schools (10th - 12th grade) are located all over the country and the prospective students are given help to choose, by their teachers and parents. Most of them choose schools closest to their home, while those who want to be adventurous would want to go a little further away from home, where they have lived for almost all the eighteen years of their lives.

As I have had the occasion to mention, there is now a 'fee-free' education system for secondary school put in place by the government. This helps with things like school uniforms, feeding and lodging (where it is a boarding institution) but some homes still need help to provide some minimum support for their children. It is therefore not surprising that some students who perform well in school and have the requisite pass of the national exam, are still not able to proceed to secondary school because there is not support from home. When that happens, the girls especially yield to pressure from the community to not go further in school.

Some girls end up pregnant and become single teenage parents. Unfortunately, there are many like this in Akrampa. Some girls are blessed to get married and start a family with their husbands. Only a handful, like Victoria, are still without a child, neither are they married, because they still have a personal desire for a career and to become economically self-supportive. Such young people try to engage themselves in ventures for survival, though it might not be fulfilling or satisfying.

Our mission currently has no program to support young boys and especially girls who are unable to attend school past the 9th grade. Indeed, when they leave the classroom, except for pastoral support and prayer, there is nothing else we can do to help them. This is why the strong kindergarten- 9th grade education, good nutrition, and a firm foundation in the Gospel are so important. It starts their lives in the right direction.

Blessings,

Pastor Ben Wilson