

2017 Trip to USA - Part 1

Dear Friends,

So much has gone on since our arrival in the USA in October, to reunite with friends, and the congregation of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lorain. This would be my fifth and Julie's second, to visit with the church. I want to quickly take both the old and new friends back into time with me kind of tracing the history of the relationship with FLC, which dates back to November 8, 1993, and to tie it all in to the purpose of this trip. This trip was set up with the generous donations of friends, so Julie and I will join the congregation to move into the New Building, and to be part of the Dedication, and Pastor Jimmy Madsen's retirement Service.

Now, the historical brief: The first trip was for a hip surgery, facilitated by the Lorain County Free Clinic (LCFC). The operation was done by Dr. Michael Kolczun at the Lorain County Community Hospital (which is now Mercy). The second trip, in the summer of 2003, was with Julie, to join FLC to celebrate the Centenary of the Church and its ministry in Lorain. My third trip was in the fall of 2009, for a hip revision surgery, which was done by Dr. Joseph George at the Cleveland Clinic, Lorain. I came back alone for the fourth time again in the fall of 2013. This time the trip began in Texas, purportedly for another hip revision, at the invitation Dr. David Templin, husband of Amy Johnson. I was happy to spend a short time in Ohio in 2013 also. This Texas trip of 2013 offered me (and FLC) the opportunity to bring awareness of the Akrapa Mission to new people. And when the opportunity came to travel to the USA again in 2017, Pastor Jimmy and the Ghana Committee, with Pastor Rosy Rivera's approval, planned the trip to start in Texas, to renew and make new friends, and to end in Ohio.

This October we stayed with the Templins, in New Braunfels, Texas from October 2nd till the 10th, and then moved to Pastor Jimmy's brother Gary and wife Shirley's home in Kempner, Texas. Gary is a retired Educationist, whose interest in innovations in "raised gardens" is something we want to replicate in Akrapa. From there we went to Pflugerville, Texas on October 15th to Immanuel Lutheran Church. Pastor Rosy graciously arranged for us to present the Case of Akrapa Ghana to her former Church, Immanuel Lutheran, Pflugerville. We stayed with friends of Pastor Jimmy, Bob and Beverly, in Round Rock, finally leaving Texas on October 17 to come 'home' to Lorain and to FLC.

Needless to say, all these engagements and travelling around, had been arranged on a calendar that the Ghana Committee had put up, essentially, to tell the Akrapa Story, not only in FLC, but to other congregations.

Once back in Ohio, as soon as it was possible to see the New First Lutheran Building, Pastor Jimmy took us there. Our impression? It's so BEAUTIFUL!!! Indeed, the most beautiful Church in Lorain and we praised God for providing resources to put up this magnificent building. The pain of the loss of the historic 1924 Chapel will remain in the hearts of many, but the beauty of this one will temper that pain and hopefully remove it forever. The fire took our old building, but we think the new building will become another part of the history of FLC, which will be treasured in our hearts.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the congregation for commitment to this project and applaud the many committees for executing this extraordinary responsibility. Our hearts are filled with great joy, and grateful for the opportunity offered to Julie and me to be part of this wonderful transition.

I will give you more detail about our other engagements and experiences in the USA in the next article.

Shalom,
Pastor Ben & Julie