

Akrampa Erosion Project - Begins

Dear Friends,

This is a shared update from Pastor Ben and The Ghana Committee:

The Ghana Mission has begun a new project for our Akrampa School, starting at the beginning of February 2022. During 2020 & 2021 we were blessed to be able to build a completely new Kitchen Building for our school. This year, we are working on some long overdue repairs to our original school. Our school and the children are the cornerstone of our mission work in Akrampa. The original school buildings, or 'blocks' of classrooms, that hold the Kindergarten through 6th Grade school have been in existence for over 25 years. This is by the Grace of God and the generosity of First Lutheran, its congregation and many dear friends and benefactors of the mission. Over the years we have been able to do some basic maintenance and repairs. However, factors like age, climate, rain and weather patterns in Ghana have begun to take their toll on our aging school buildings.

One of the most serious problems facing our Akrampa Mission School is erosion. Ghana has a dry hot season, and then a couple of very wet rainy seasons. The rains in Ghana cause flooding and destruction (sometimes even loss of life) on a yearly basis. Ghana gets so much rain at a few points during the year, that they have even named their seasons as the 'minor' and 'major' rainy season. It is this level of rain that is washing away the earth around the **foundations** of our Akrampa School buildings and causing a huge erosion problem. The foundation bricks of the school are becoming more and more exposed and broken due to the erosion. If this is allowed to continue, it will cause more serious damage to the foundation of the buildings and could compromise the structural integrity or even put the buildings at risk of collapse. Preserving the '*physical buildings*' of the school is the main way that we preserve the ability for our mission work in Ghana to continue. Education of the children in academics, as well as the most important **Gospel of Jesus Christ** is the reason we began this mission, and that is also why it has continued for all of these years. Adding our ability to feed the children breakfast and also help the community with other needs has been an added joy over the years.

The Ghana Committee and Pastor Ben wrote a proposal and presented it to the FLC Congregational Council to ask for the funds to be allotted to make the Erosion Project possible. We are so deeply blessed and grateful that Council voted yes, and the funds have been made available. Thank you!!! This project protects the safety of our students and teachers, as well as the physical integrity of the buildings. We want the school to be there for generations to come ... so that many, many students can continue to benefit from a good education. The Ghana Committee and Pastor Ben would like to extend our deepest thanks to the Church Council of First Lutheran!

Work on the project has begun and has been going on steadily. The contractor, his men, and extra help in the way of 'day labor' (men who work on certain projects, as needed) have begun the difficult task of digging and rebuilding around the foundation. This work is done using hand tools, like shovels, not large machines like we would expect in the USA. The work is not without its challenges - both obvious and unplanned. Currently, the weather in Ghana has become difficult for the people, and the construction work.

The Harmattan is a seasonal wind which blows across West Africa, including Ghana, every year from the end of November through mid-March, at intermittent strengths. This wind can interrupt commerce and daily life for days. The dry wind lowers the humidity, which can lead to hot days and cool nights. An effect known as the Harmattan Haze consists of a heavy amount of dust present in the air which can severely limit visibility and block the sun for several days, comparable to a thick fog. The risk of fire increases because of the dry winds... which can cause severe damage to crops and livestock. This can also make driving in many places a real challenge because of the fog that hangs over the road. The Harmattan wind literally 'sucks' water from the body. The only wise thing for anyone to do is to drink lots of water. Common physical symptoms include cracked lips, dry throat and skin, and dehydration - which is dangerous to those working outside in the elements.

The majority of the erosion damage is due to rain, but now during the Harmattan, we experience the opposite in Ghana. Because of the Harmattan, rivers have dwindled in flow and caused the Water Company to reduce water supply to all of the pipes. This means the clean water that is piped into Akrampa needs to be

rationed for use of cooking and drinking. The water needed for the construction project needs to come mainly from elsewhere, like the rivers and streams.

As with every project that has ever been done at our school, the children want to be involved and helpful. The school children have been very supportive by fetching buckets of water from all over, so the work would not be suspended for lack of water. But it has gotten to the point where we had to hire a *water tanker* to bring in water, at a cost. This is one of the several contingencies that could not have been planned for, as the weather patterns in Ghana are unpredictable. In the 3rd week of February, Ghana did receive some rainfall. This has helped with the heat and the water supply. It is a good example of how the weather can change without warning. Many people living in Ohio can understand this, as your weather varies from extremely cold to mild during your winter season - and both snow and rain can be experienced during Ohio winters.

We thank each of you for your continued heartfelt giving to The Ghana Mission. Our mission is still fully funded by the generous donations of the congregation and friends of the mission. We again want to thank the Council of First Lutheran for their special allotment of funds to make the Erosion Project possible.

Please stay tuned to Pastor Ben's articles in the coming months for updates on the Akrampa School Erosion Project. Please continue to **keep Ghana in your prayers**, along with all of the people involved in this wonderful project.

With Thanks,
Pastor Ben and The Ghana Committee