

The Akrampa Kitchen is complete

Dear Friends,

This is a letter of celebration! The new Akrampa Kitchen is finally finished, dedicated and open for our school children! Praise our Lord!

I think to really appreciate how important this is, we need to re-visit the past. I have pulled an excerpt from one of my older letters to help us all see how far we have really come over the years.

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**This is from my own October 2017 letter to the congregation:**

*"A little bit of going back into the history of the development of the Akrampa School, I believe should bring my readers into perspective. Our mission together began in 1994 after I returned home from Ohio. Pastor Jimmy came to Ghana and dedicated the Mission in 1995! Our school started with 18 children, a motley of ages, with some even too old to be in Grade 3, yet desiring to be in school. In Ghana, children may start primary education at 5 years old, but most people send their children to start when they are 6 years of age. I noticed a few of the children who would cry, running after their friends and brothers and sisters when they left the village to go to school in the big town, an indication that they also wished to go to school. For me, it was sufficient reason to provide the village with a school of their own. This was the beginning of the first ever school in Akrampa.*

*So, we built a shed, from sticks and branches of the palm trees and Mercy Abbeyquaye was the first teacher. In Ghana, female teachers are respectfully addressed as "Madam." This is how Mercy has become known to all in the village. Nobody called her by her name, only addressed as "Madam." She was asked to do this because she was a retired teacher and lived in the vicinity, while I lived in Saltpond, and couldn't come early enough myself, to teach. Mercy is still one of the most important people in helping our mission school and breakfast program run efficiently.*

*This "infant" school under the "palm branches shed," at various times admitted some older girls - one of whom was 21 years old at the time - who really wanted to "catch up" with what they thought was missing in their lives because they never went to school. All of them, unfortunately, couldn't stand the challenge of sitting among students who could actually be their children, so they left school to go and get married!!*

*The shed school "population" began to increase, and we had to do two sessions in that structure for two distinctive classes - Kindergarten and primary (1 & 2) raising the necessity of adding on the classroom, and changing the structure from palm branches to a real cement building. This we did, by ourselves: the men and fathers making the bricks with the women bringing the water and sometimes to replenish the sand for the bricks with loads of it carried in big pans on their heads. The first three-room block for the first three classes of the primary was built over three years (1999 to 2001)- a room per year. Then we had to add three more classrooms to have a complete 6-room block for the primary school because we didn't want the tiny children to walk the over four kilometers to school in the town, risking their lives on the highway. In 2005, Pastor Woody came to Ghana and dedicated the School with the Bishop of the Anglican Church and local authorities.*

*By the close of 2007, we had a building of six classrooms that made the primary school. And now, Akrampa has its own junior high school so the children can receive a full basic education all on the same compound. So Akrampa school has reason to celebrate its existence, culminating this year in the first Graduation Ceremony of Junior High School students.*

*We give thanks to God for his mercies and provisions, and we are grateful for the continued support of First Lutheran Church of Lorain, Ohio, and our many other friends from Ohio and Texas. We could not do any of this without you. The people of Akrampa and I pray that your love, prayers and financial support will continue for many years to come."*

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### **And now we look forward to the future:**

We began the year 2021 with thankfulness to God. Indeed, but for His faithfulness and mercies, we wouldn't have been able to surmount the huge challenges that faced us as we began to execute the *vision* of changing the circumstances of Akrampa, the school and the community, by building a befitting structure with duality of purpose in mind: The Akrampa Kitchen.

Akrampa School, which began with only a handful of pupils, is again nearing the mark of 300 pupils. The teaching staff total is twenty (20). We cannot give a definite figure on the number of students at this time because new students are being admitted each day. Since January 18, 2021 when all schools in Ghana were reopened after the Covid-19 shutdowns, the students have been flooding back. It may be a little while before we are certain of what the steady head count will be for our school. As you know the entire world, and especially schools, are learning how to do everything again to be in compliance with health guidelines. The fluctuation in numbers of students sometimes presents minor challenges with our breakfast program, but I choose to look at it as a blessing. The more students who come the better - more students to feed, and more students to educate, and more students to hear the Gospel - could only be a blessing!

Feeding the pupils started in 2008, a policy instituted when Akrampa was visited by a delegation from FLC. 2020 was the 12<sup>th</sup> full year running of the Breakfast Program, and for all of those years, the meal was cooked under the trees on the compound, exposed to all kinds of weather and unhygienic conditions.

Thus, early in 2020, before the pandemic hit the world, a gracious woman - whose late husband was also very supportive to the children of Akrampa, naming them, "*The Little Lambs*" - responded to the appeal to build a **small structure, a proper kitchen**, in which the meals will be cooked. There's a hymn, the words of the first line of whose first stanza, goes, "*God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders tell perform*". Our request for the building to be a *mere kitchen* for the Breakfast Program changed to becoming a *multi-purpose building* in which students taking the *Home Arts/Economics* subject (which is an examination subject) will also be taught, thanks to her generosity.

On February 3, 2021, the new kitchen building was finally *Dedicated and Handed Over* to the administration of Akrampa School, and to the District Education Office. It took a year to complete this building. That makes 2021 the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the Breakfast Program, but the **FIRST** year that the food will be cooked **indoors!** We have a special stove made from the rim of a vehicle that is locally made to be able to support heavy utensils like the heavily laden cauldron in which the meal for children is cooked.

In the building, apart from its original purpose of being a kitchen in which cooking the meals for the pupils will take place, Junior High School Pupils will be taught *Home Arts/Economics* as a subject. Ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) Graders, the final year students at our Akrampa school, will take their National Exam in this subject, on a variety of topics, amongst which are the following:

- ❖ Food and nutrition
- ❖ Clothing and textiles
- ❖ Home management
- ❖ Family economics
- ❖ Child development and family relationships
- ❖ Housing and home equipment

To facilitate the teaching of *Home Arts/Economics* as a subject, all the necessary teaching and learning materials/equipment have been purchased. I can proudly say that the furnishings are complete. We have a traditional stove (in addition to our handmade stove for the breakfast meal), a small freezer, cupboards, tables, chairs, work spaces, a sewing machine, pots and pans and plates and utensils. It's a regular functioning kitchen - and also a classroom!! It's wonderful!

The building is a beauty to see, resplendent in color and very attractive. On the steps and inside the kitchen, the floor is a beautiful hand laid mosaic tile mixed with other tiles of white and wood grain. It has a sturdy door and large windows for natural light. The local community is overwhelmed with joy for our students.

The dedication ceremony was a grand celebration, attended by many local officials in high standing. The students baked lots of cookies in the days before, using the new kitchen, to be served at the event. We decorated the building and there was a ribbon cutting ceremony at the door.

The local Anglican (Episcopal) Priest, joined me and the District Education Officer to cut the ribbon. The Bishop of the Diocese was represented by two ladies from his office. He himself called me later to express profound gratitude.

Anyone who wishes to see the photos of the Dedication ceremony can see them posted on the Facebook page of FLC. But I will also attach a few of the photos at the end of this article.

We give great thanks to our main benefactor, who we were uncertain if she would want her name printed here... But let me speak on behalf of everyone from Akrampa. WE could not have done this without her patience, grace, love, support, vision and financial support. To our great friend, your husband's "Little Lambs" will be well fed and cared for now thanks to you!

We also give great thanks to Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church who has been a wonderful partner in our ministry for numerous years now. And a special thanks to Bethesda for the very generous financial gift that they gave to finish the kitchen. Most of the appliances and furnishings inside are done because of Bethesda's ongoing support.

And of course, Akrampa wants to send thanks to First Lutheran of Lorain, our home congregation, for their ever present love and support. Our partnership began when I first met all of you in 1993, and it

has been strong and faithful since then! Also, an additional thanks for money that was given from the Parson's Grant to help with the kitchen.

Thank you so much to each individual person from both FLC and Bethesda who **prayed** for our kitchen project or gave financially to help us bring it into reality.

God has His hand our Akrampa mission - and we are thankful for the 'hands and feet' of Jesus, represented in all of our loving mission friends and partners.

All this to the glory of God.

May His great name be praised.

Blessings - Pastor Ben

\*Please see the photos below of the Akrampa Kitchen.