

January 2011

## Providing for Akrampa

Dear Friends,

Once again I come to you by way of another letter from Akrampa - I believe it is appropriate to call it thus - with greetings from the village and its people. The entire people, including ( and especially ) the school children want to say, **Merry Christmas**, and **Happy New Year** to you all! My family joins them in saying, **Afe Hyiapa**, meaning, may the blessings of the New Year be upon you!

When First Lutheran and I began our mission work in Akrampa, Ghana, we knew that it was important to teach the villagers how to provide for themselves. At that time their only means of sustenance, apart from cultivating the soil, was to 'raid' the forest for firewood to sell on market days. I said 'raid' because the government had placed restrictions with heavy penalty on the forest as a reserve. Anyone caught in the reserve, even for picking dead pieces of logs, were fined at the court, or incarcerated for some months.

This made me decide, after meeting with the villagers, to help them find an 'alternative' means of earning an income to maintain their existence. The first thing they needed was training to help them acquire the skills to produce and sell commodities. The training provided for them was done in a single room structure that was the first 'mission building' in the village. It was provided by First Lutheran and dedicated by Pastor Jimmy when he came to Ghana in 1996.

We started with teaching the villagers how to bake and sell bread. As simple as this may sound, they really needed this skill. Other skills that we have taught in the village are soap-making, tie-dye batik making, and creating jewelry from nuts. In the next letter I will tell you in more detail about the training. I will also tell you if we were able to achieve the objective and purpose of helping Akrampa to provide for themselves.

Blessings

*Pastor Ben*