

July 2010

## War delivered Pastor Ben to us...

*The 1989-1996 Liberian civil war, which was one of Africa's bloodiest, claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians. It displaced a million others, uprooted most of the rest, and destroyed a once-viable economic infrastructure. The strife spread through West Africa, slowing the democratization that had been progressing steadily. Pastor Ben & wife, Julie, were in Liberia when the war broke out and were caught in the middle. Pastor Ben begins his story below. In August, he will tell us, in more detail, how he and Julie walked out of Liberia into freedom.*



### How does this connect to First Lutheran?

Dear Friends,

For some of you this will be the first time you are hearing this story, but for most, it will be a reminder of a beautiful relationship that has spanned 17 years.

This story actually has its genesis in the Republic of Liberia, where Julie and I were serving as missionary teachers in the Lutheran Training Institute. The terrible civil war that had started in Liberia in the closing days of 1989 caused Julie and me to be thrown in jail. We were charged with being citizens of the West African nations that had contributed to the Peace Keeping Force. Julie was pregnant with Ida, and we were both abused physically while in Liberian jail.

By Divine Intervention, Charles Taylor, the rebel leader, (as he was known before he became the head of state of Liberia) caused our release from jail. There were two Sierra Leonean Christian brethren who were in jail with us. One of them was a schoolmate of Charles Taylor's wife. This brother managed to send a note to Mrs. Taylor and they were set free, but they didn't forget Julie and me.

At this time, my hip was degenerating fast and needed to be repaired. Dr. Elike Takyi, another Ghanaian who was imprisoned with us, was released early and allowed to leave Liberia. Dr. Takyi, who was then the Principal of the Lutheran Training Institute, (and until he died, served as the Administrator to the Mission here in Ghana) promised to take my medical needs to the USA. Dr. Takyi told Dr. James Stull of Iowa about my plight. Dr. Stull had previously served as the Resident Medical Director at Phoebe Lutheran Hospital in Liberia. Dr. Stull took my story to the Global Health Ministries meeting in Minnesota.

Dr. Denis Radefeld of First Lutheran Church was at that meeting in Minnesota. Dr. Radefeld told the Pastors and congregation of First Lutheran about my need of a hip replacement. By the Grace of God, First Lutheran decided to sponsor me to come to the USA for a total hip replacement surgery in 1993.

When this all began back in Liberia, Julie and I knew nothing of First Lutheran, nor did they know us. But I believe fervently in my heart, that God planned it all along. Our relationship with First Lutheran was given to us by the Grace of God, to glorify Him. And through God and First Lutheran, I was able to start the mission in Akrampa, Ghana in 1994.

With love and blessings,

Pastor Ben