

## The Gift of a New Car

Dear Friends,

This month I'd like to talk to you about a totally different topic. A new chapter, that touches both the life of the mission, and the life of my family. On January 4, 2017 I got a new car! It is a 2016 SUZUKI VITARA, provided for the mission and my family, by the loving & very generous contributions of the members of the Congregation of First Lutheran Church, the Endowment Grant, and with the support of Church Council through a loan.

This is not the first car that First Lutheran Church has bought for me. First Lutheran has always understood that the importance of having a vehicle cannot be underestimated. Please know that without your intervention I could NOT fulfill my work as your missionary. In 1995, funds were provided for me to buy a 1990 model Opel. That lasted till 2003 when it was replaced by a 1999 model Jeep Cherokee Sport. The Jeep was bought with funds that were raised as a loving gift from the 2003 Centenary Event at First Lutheran. So, both of those were used vehicles, and they served our mission well! The Suzuki Vitara is the first BRAND NEW CAR that I have ever owned!!! It is so exciting!

In Ghana, a car cannot be driven home by its new owner until it is paid entirely in full. In December of 2016 when I saw an advertisement for a 2016 Suzuki Vitara, with a 3-year warranty, at a very reasonable sale price, the Church Council stepped in to help the Ghana Committee and the congregation with funds. The Council has allowed the Ghana Committee to borrow the difference in the money that was given by the congregation & Endowment, and the money that was needed. To get this sale price I had to pay for the vehicle before Christmas, and sign the papers. But due to the holidays, it took time for all of the paperwork, licenses, and insurance to become official. So I took possession of the new car on January 4th. I cannot say thank you enough to both the congregation and the Council for their timely intervention!

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the members of the congregation that currently, and have always supported me, and the mission. Do you realize that you have kept our mission running all of these years? Your giving supports day to day operations of the mission, and now the new car also. Our mission has never had a line in the official church budget. It has always been supported by the gifts of the congregation and the Endowment Fund. I'd like to thank the Council for its decision to approve the loan of needed funds to purchase the new car. What a blessing that the Council has reaffirmed their support of me, my ministry in Ghana, and the will of the congregation that this mission go forward.

The new car was needed for the Mission, here in Ghana, so that the work will be facilitated, making moving around easier

and more reliable. If I didn't have a car, I would have to depend on some means of public transport. The drive from my home to the mission village of Akrampa is 51 miles. The cost of using public transportation, like a taxi, for that distance is outrageous. I also have to be able to move around the community in the course of the work to help the people of Akrampa, to provide breakfast, supplies, and rides to villagers who need help with their lives, or medical needs.

The road network here is generally a challenge, and when it rains, it makes accessibility more difficult if one didn't have the conveniences of a personal car. I couldn't do what I have been able to do over the years, if I didn't have a personal vehicle. The vehicle is used to carry things for the mission and people of the village. Since I drive the vehicle, and I keep it at home, it also converts to be a family vehicle to be available for myself and my family, and for personal travel. As a personal vehicle, it affects my lifestyle and health. As the Jeep got older and more uncomfortable, it affected my moods and general body tone, particularly, my back and the hip. The roads are generally not very good and challenging to drive on for long distances.

At the time I am writing this, I have had the new Vitara for 6 weeks, and already I have realized the significant difference of riding in a brand new car. The Jeep had become very jumpy and therefore uncomfortable to ride in on long distances. That always affected my back pains, and caused a lot of referred pains, as well. The new car makes me feel like I am young again. I have realized that the lower back pains I used to have constantly, from driving the Jeep, have minimized.

The Jeep was a great vehicle, but it has outlived its purpose. When I parked it in January, it had over 404,000 miles on it. The fuel costs for the Jeep were high, and it broke down often, which was a real challenge to me. As an old car, it was becoming increasingly, very costly to maintain. The parts are still around but the frequency of it breaking down, and the duration of time -sometimes days, or weeks- really affected my moods and health.

The above-mentioned benefits are what make me so grateful to all who lovingly gave to make this beautiful, timely gift, possible. Since beginning to drive the new Vitara, this is the FIRST time in many, many years, that I have not encountered any vehicle problem that needed repairs. Now there is no anxiety that I am going to experience another problem. Neither have I felt insecure like driving in the Jeep as I did in the last 5 years. I can now feel peace of mind.

May the Lord continue to bless you, individually and as a congregation.

I thank you very much.

Blessings, Pastor Ben