

Personal Update/Akrampa school

Dear Friends,

In my October letter to you I talked about some health challenges that Julie & I are going through. In that letter I mentioned that I had an epidural shot in my back, a procedure recommended by the neurosurgeon who is treating my lower back issue. This shot was administered on October 2nd, and the expectation - though very dismal - was that it might help to reduce the pains, but that didn't happen. The doctor had actually told me that around 40% of patients who receive this treatment get some small relief, while in 40% of others, no relief at all. I consider myself in the bracket of those who did not benefit, at all. I had consciously decided in my mind to 'dull' the pains, to ignore them, though that is not easy. Since 1974 when I was diagnosed with a degenerative hip issue, I have had to live with pain in varying forms and degrees. Pain medication can help sometimes, but I hesitate to take them over long periods at the risk of damage to my kidneys. Then things changed again for me on my one of my trips to Akrampa this week ...

As I indicated in my October article, I am not allowing the pains to deter me from going to Akrampa, to do God's work and supervise the completion of the Kitchen Building. My gratitude is that I have a very functional vehicle, the **Suzuki Vitara** which was bought *brand new*, for me by the congregation of FLC, in January of 2017. It is providing the means of getting to Akrampa, back home, and to other related trips for which it was purchased. Since I drive in my own vehicle I am able to endure the lower back pains because of the comfort and convenience that it provides, unlike being in public transportation (buses, etc.). I have been managing my issues such that they don't hinder me, nor reduce my efficiency.

*I gave a detailed update on the progress of the **Akrampa Kitchen Building** in my October article.*

I hope that everyone was able to read it.

If not, please go the FLC website: www.firstlutheranlorain.org

and then to: Outreach > Ghana > Ghana Archive

On Monday November 9th I was in Akrampa to oversee the installation of an outdoor sewer system that will dispose of waste water from the restrooms and the sinks in the Kitchen Building. Obviously, we needed to get that taken care of before adding all of the cooking equipment into the building.

This trip to Akrampa proved to be very painful for me. While the new sewer system was being installed, I tripped over some of the PVC pipes that were being used in the construction and suffered a severe fall. I fell on the right side of my body and also hit my head. The pain in my body is intense. I had x-rays done to be sure I had not broken any ribs, and I have not. I am now struggling to lift my right arm and sleeping is difficult due to the pain on my right side. The doctor has prescribed a week's worth of pain medication, and I am taking it, contrary to the fact that just before this had happened I was really praying and working to deal with my previous back pain without medication. Sometimes God uses illness and suffering for the furtherance of His Gospel. The existence of illness or suffering in a believer's life does **not** constitute a life that lacks faith. God's power is made perfect in our weakness. And so while I must admit to praying for my pain to be relieved, I also pray that God's power and grace will shine through me as I go through this ordeal.

I will continue to give updates in each of my articles as we progress with the Kitchen Building. It really is very exciting to see this come together, even with the delays that Covid-19 have caused for us!

There are plans to Dedicate and Commission the New Kitchen Building, by the close of the year. We wish to hand over the building so when the school resumes in January 2021, the Home Arts Course can begin classes in the building. We hope to complete the furnishings and appliances by then, if possible.

Our Akrampa School 2019/2020 Academic Graduates narrowly missed having their classes in the New Kitchen Building, which would have been such a wonderful thing. They graduated this September, almost three months later than usual, which always has been in June. The Coronavirus pandemic and the lockdowns & restrictions that followed have severely affected education globally, and therefore Ghanaian students are not exempted in its impact on their education. Schools were closed in Ghana from March 2020 (when the two major cities of the country, Accra, the capital and Kumasi, went into lockdown for two weeks) until the graduating classes of junior/senior high schools were recalled, at the end of June 2020, to prepare for their national examinations. Before students were allowed back into schools to be prepared for the final level examinations, the government commissioned a company that has the resources to fumigate all schools across the country from Kindergarten through 12th Grade.

During this time only the 9th Grade students were allowed to return to our Akrampa school. All of the other students, from Kindergarten through Junior High 8th Grade, were made to remain at home. In larger cities (than Akrampa), virtual classes were organized for some students by schools that have the facilities and resources so that the children do not lose out.

The Akrampa Graduating Class of 9th Grade Students this year is made up of 18 students, 10 girls and 8 boys. They were received back into school to be prepared for the national examinations that took place in September. The 9th Grade students were in our Akrampa school from June to September under strict adherence to the Ghanaian Covid-19 protocols:

- Frequent washing of hands under running water (the Education Ministry provided water containers, hand washing soaps, and tissue paper)
- Distancing - seats well spread out in the classrooms
- Wearing of face masks required at all times by everyone, with no exceptions
- Taking of temperatures of all - both students and teachers and even visitors

While the 9th Grade graduating class of students were in school, they were not denied the breakfast meal that is given with love from our donations in the USA. Normally we give breakfast to ALL of the students three days a week while school is in session. But because our graduating class are fewer in number than the entire student population, they got a meal each day of the week as they prepared for exams.

If the government doesn't change its position, in spite of the fact that we are also having COVID-19 cases rise in the last two months, Ghanaian schools will reopen in January 2021 to all students.

We have followed with interest the USA elections, because Ghanaians will also be going to the polls on December 7th, to elect a government for the next four years. Our political landscape during elections is very challenging. Whether due to illiteracy or pure sycophancy, we find that some people become inclined to cause violence and other anti-social activities to make the road to Election Day very scary, in some places, around the country.

The Christian community, as usual, is using the church services and specially organized prayer sessions, to teach against violence and to remind all Ghanaians that party politics shouldn't divide the nation. Even as we prayed for your election, please pray for ours also, so the will of God will prevail in the entire world.

God bless you all!
Pastor Ben

P.S.
Please take a look at the photo that is attached.
This is a side and front view of the new Kitchen Building that all of you have made possible with your love and generous donations.
Thank you.