

Thank you for Prayers / New Building Update

Dear Friends,

In last month's letter, I requested prayers for myself and my wife Julie because we are going through some health issues, particularly with regard to pain in our joints. For me, it has to do with my lower back, and for Julie, her left knee. In Julie's case, her issues with pain are relatively new compared to mine which have been present since 2013 and resulted in a trip to Texas. My back was one of the medical issues that sent me to Texas, besides the hip (prosthesis) that I thought, then, might need some attention. While in Texas, it turned out that my lower back was what really needed help, and Dr. David Templin (who hosted me at his home with his wife, Amy, and family) helped greatly by connecting me with multiple doctors including a pain specialist. I was also blessed to take part in sessions with his friend Dr. Andrew Burnett (Texas Physical Therapy Specialists Clinic), whose setup used some form of acupuncture (that they described as pins and needles) to help me get great relief and be able to return home.

The relief from those treatments had kept my pain well managed until the later part of 2019 when I began to experience pain again. It would have been a dream to be able to go back to Texas if things were normal, but many factors prohibited that, including the global outbreak of Covid-19. I have been seeing neurosurgeons and orthopedic doctors here in Ghana, who put me on medications for the past 8 months to try to manage the pain and allow my body to relax and heal. When those did not provide positive responses, my doctors decided that an epidural injection in my lower back could bring some relief. This was done October 2nd 2020, and I am praying and hoping that some good will come from that. In the meantime, Julie also began have pain in her knee, and scans showed that she has lost almost all the cartilage in her left knee, a situation they described as bone on bone. The Ghanaian doctors are saying that there is nothing they can do for her!! Please continue to keep both of us in your prayers for healing.

Through all of this pain, we have **not** neglected the responsibility of seeing to the construction of the new multipurpose Kitchen Building that has been built for the school in Akrampa, or our regular mission duties. Since 2008, the students (referred to as "*the Little Lambs*" by one of our mission's greatest friends and benefactors) attending Akrampa School have benefited from being fed a meal a day, a Breakfast.

Since the 'Breakfast Program' began in 2008, the meal for the children had been cooked under trees, in a shady spot, but under very unhygienic conditions. I made an appeal for help to the Ghana Committee to build a portable shade or pavilion under which the cooking of the meals could be done. The Headteacher of the Akrampa school found out about my appeal and asked if possibly more could be done... That led to us form a plan to build an entire building instead of just a pavilion or covered area.

For Ghanaian students, the course of *Home Arts* (or Home Economics) is an examinable subject on the huge national test called, *National Basic Education Certificate (B.E.C.E)*, which is taken by students graduating from Junior High Grade 9. In Ghana, Home Arts often can become a career for the girls. So as they graduate from 9th Grade and proceed to the Secondary School (the Senior High School) for Grades 10th - 12th, they have to pass all parts of the B.E.C.E exam, including Home Arts. Later, passing 12th Grade then gives the children the possible option to continue on the college/university level, although not all children will do that, just like in the usa.

The new Kitchen Building will be used as *classroom*, and as a fully functional *kitchen*. The teachers will use it to teach the Home Arts course, and to cook the daily breakfast meal. The students will use the new building as a traditional classroom setting to learn the textbook part of Home Arts, and they will use it for 'hands on' training in a full kitchen setting. But even more important, in the new building the practical/hands on section of the Home Arts B.E.C.E exam can be taken by all students!

The appeal to make this happen was accepted by the Ghana Committee. Immediately our friend and benefactor of the mission gave a generous amount of money to get the building started to help the "Little Lambs." Some additional money was Granted to us by FLC. Currently the physical building is complete. Walls, floors, doors, roof, plumbing, lighting, etc. are done. In Ghana, that counts the building as 'complete'. Of course, we still have to furnish the inside with desks, tables, chairs - and all appliances and kitchen equipment has to be purchased and installed. **Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church** has very recently donated a generous amount of money to the Ghana Mission that will be used in part, to finish these items for the building. *Thank you so much, Bethesda!* It has been a team effort to complete this during a global pandemic. The people of Akrampa, and I, are so deeply grateful for the help we have been given by FLC, Bethesda, and especially our great friend and protector of the "Little Lambs", who was the one who started the process for us. I have commissioned Plaques to be made and affixed to the outside of the building to give thanks and credit to all who gave generously for this project.

There is the additional feeling of great pride among the people of Akrampa to be blessed with this new Kitchen Building/Classroom. Let me explain why. In a catchment area of not less than 70 square miles around, there is no other Basic School (K - 9th Grade) anywhere near that has this type of facility! Only a handful of Secondary Schools (10th - 12th Grade) have anything that's uniquely similar.

Over the last 12 years since the breakfast program began in 2008, Akrampa School has emerged as a school that is making a difference. It has Breakfast fed to the students, it has power (electricity), water coming directly into the school and now this new facility. Akrampa's new Kitchen Building is the envy of even the staff of the District Education Office, who are eagerly waiting for it to be released for use as a *Center for Examination*, and for the teaching and learning of the Home Arts subject. To explain more fully, when the building is fully furnished, the entire District surrounding Akrampa will be able to use our new building for the testing of students in the Home Arts. Currently, most students in the District go to the personal home of their teachers to complete that part of their exam. So please know in your hearts, that each of you who gave to this project are impacting the lives of students in our entire District, not just our village of Akrampa. Thank you!

Since the original plan of a 'covered area' for cooking turned into a full building, there was discussion at the beginning, of how large the building should be and what uses it should serve. The expanded building that was built consists of a large hall/room, half of which will have the stoves and other kitchen appliances. This will be the half used to cook Breakfast for the students and as the kitchen for the Home Arts students. The other half of the room will be used as a normal classroom with desks and chairs for teaching the textbook side of Home Arts. When it is time for the practical/hands on part of class (or for the exams), the students will move into the "**Kitchen**" side and have all the demonstrations for their lessons. Two other smaller rooms were constructed and will be used for the Office of the Headteacher and as a Storeroom for all the teaching and learning materials, and the bulk food stuffs that will be used to cook Breakfast for the students.

The actual building is now ready for use in a very basic sense. It is a complete structure with a purpose. As the students return to school for this academic year (as Covid-19 lockdowns are lifted) the building will be used immediately as a basic classroom. Students will use temporary seats from other classrooms while we are working on finishing things. Final planning and cost evaluations are underway now to furnish the new building with everything it needs. But in the meantime, nothing in Ghana goes to waste. The students and teachers are very excited just to have the new building. It will be handed over from the construction phase to open for use very soon, and it will begin to serve its purpose. I will send updates as we complete the final stages of this wonderful new building.

I wish to thank all who continue to provide for the needs of the school, the children, and for this Special Building!

God bless you all!

Pastor Ben