

Prayers for Pastor Ben and Julie

Dear Friends,

Many of my friends, both American and Ghanaian can empathize when I talk about physical aches, pains and injuries. Our bodies spend so much time taking care of us and then at a certain point we have to slowdown and take care of our bodies.

Often we may consider pain in our physical bodies as negative. And while it is not easy to endure, sometimes our physical pain can change our attitude or even our entire life in a truly unexpected way. In 1993 the physical pain of my hip brought me to the USA for the first time for hip replacement surgery. That trip led me to First Lutheran and to the mission work that we have been doing together for years. Our Lord is not the author of our pain and suffering but He sometimes allows it to happen when He knows that it is going to lead us onto a road He wants us to travel.

While I have been back to the USA a few times to visit with FLC, I was back in 2013 for medical issues involving my back and hip. Members of the Ghana Committee helped to make connections with doctors in Texas. My time in Texas did not involve surgery as it was deemed that my hip replacement was still healthy. But I did undergo intense therapy and other treatments for my back. I also made some wonderful friends in Texas! And I was blessed by the hospitality and loving care that was shown to me in Texas.

The pain in my back has now returned. I've been fighting it and dealing with it again since somewhere before my birthday, which is at the end of June. Some days are better than others, but overall the pain is very intense.

It has effected everything about how I stand and walk. Initially, I had an x-ray done and it revealed that my hip prosthetic is still good and normal. But when I wake up my first few steps take so much effort because I have to try to ignore the excruciating pain around my hip and pelvis that shoots down from behind my thighs into my knee. Gradually, by midday, as a result of walking around the pain level comes down. When I bend down I have to slowly stretch up, or the pain will cause me to tumble over unless I hold onto something. Over time, I have come to realize that now I can no longer carry anything that is over about ten pounds.

I'm not allowed to have an MRI done because of the material that my prosthetic hip is constructed from, but even if I was, MRI's are very expensive and I could not afford the scan. My doctor did order a CT scan to check my back and hip. On August 27th I saw a neurosurgeon. He prescribed medications for me for three weeks to try to help with the pain and relax my back. His concern is that if things do not improve he may have to put injections into my spine.

The pain that I am having with my back has actually changed the way that I walk and my stride. On September 5th, I was at a funeral for a friend and after the service, I lost my balance and fell down a few steps inside the chapel. I was able to shield my fall to protect my prosthetic hip, but in the meantime I fell very hard on my right shoulder. I was taken to the hospital. And praise God, nothing is broken in my shoulder. I'm severely bruised and very sore. The doctor put my arm in a sling for two weeks.

Despite all of this, work goes on in Akrampa. And I have continued to go there to oversee the new kitchen building that is in the works. There is still much to be done to complete the inside of the building and furnish it with appliances, cookware, tables and chairs, etc.

As I have been going through these trials, my wife Julie has had her own health challenges. Her left knee has been giving her issues for some time now. The pain has been increasing as she walks and now often by the end of the day she is limping. The doctors say that the cartilage inside her knee is gone, effectively her knee is 'bone on bone'. It breaks my heart to see my wife in this pain. Her doctor has prescribed her medication and exercises to help keep the leg strong to support around the knee. We have been able to have her receive a couple of treatments of massage therapy which she says help.

Of course, as everyone in the world knows having health problems is never easy. But things are certainly more complicated now with the changes that Covid-19 have created for our world.

I would humbly ask of you please to pray for my wife, Julie and I. Please pray for our health and our pain. And that the Lord would continue to give me the strength to minister to the needs of the people of Akrampa through my own pain. We can continue to have joy and strength in the presence of our Lord no matter our circumstances. I'm grateful to be able to still care for my family and the cherished people of Akrampa that I have spent a large part of my adult life becoming part of their lives.

As many of us are now looking at the entire world through the lens of how Covid-19 has changed things, please allow me to share an insight that was shared with me. One of the women on our Ghana Committee shared this, as she had heard it from an American Pastor :

C.O.V.I.D -19 = Christ Over Viruses & Infectious Diseases - Joshua 1:9

"This is my command - be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9

May God bless you, my friends. Please pray for us, as we are always praying for you. Be bold, be brave! Live in the freedom that is yours through Christ, not the governments of our countries.

Blessings, Pastor Ben