

Dear Friends,

My wife, Julie, and I are currently in Ohio. We arrived in early July 2024, and will hopefully be staying until the end of November, or beginning of December. It has been very nice getting together with old friends and also meeting many new faces at both of "our" churches. On July 21st, Pastor Angela and *Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church* hosted us for a church service and reception centered around the Ghana Mission. Pastor Angela and I utilized an 'interview' format during the sermon time, to share about the mission.

On July 28th, *First Lutheran Church* hosted a Ghana Sunday Celebration, during which I preached the sermon. Then we had a congregational potluck and time of sharing after the service. For some of you who may have missed attending FLC on July 28th, or if you just wanted to know more, I have printed out the full text of my sermon, and I am sharing it here, in my letter to you.

Please continue reading this is my full sermon, given at FLC.

Sunday July 28, 2024 - FLC Sermon -- Christ, the Light of the World.

INTRODUCTION:

It is not my intention to preach a sermon, rather to do an overview of our partnership in mission. To that end I'm not going to use any of the scriptures of the day. Nevertheless, I wish to make mention of Verse 33, where John recalls Jesus saying, after feeding the 5,000 plus people, "*For the Bread of God is He Who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world.*" *John 6:33 AMPC*

BODY:

Jesus is not only life to the world, but light of the world.

In the Gospel of John chapters 8 & 9 we read:

Once more Jesus addressed the crowd. He said, "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the Light which is Life.

John 8:12 AMPC

"As long as I am in the world, I am the world's Light."

John 9:5 AMPC

For 30 years, **we - myself and First Lutheran Church**, and more recently, **Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church**, and certain individuals - have been in mission together, in my own country, Ghana. Our objective, our focus, has been to bring life and light to the people of Akrampa and its environs. In pursuit of that agenda, let me highlight a few significant things we have achieved over this 30-year period, that are impacting the people.

Firstly, the GOSPEL:

Let me straightaway make the point, that when you sent me to Akrampa as your missionary pastor: building a school, and bringing good drinking water to the community were not in my mind. They just happened, as the Spirit of God led me to identify these essential and basic needs and how to respond.

We went to preach Christ of whom the Prophet Isaiah had said, *"THE SPIRIT of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed and qualified me to preach the Gospel of good tidings to the meek, the poor, and afflicted; He has sent me to bind up and heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the [physical and spiritual] captives and the opening of the prison and of the eyes to those who are bound, [Rom. 10:15.]"*
Isaiah 61:1 AMPC

The reality and relevance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that it touches the sphere and circumstances of humanity. You can say that it is consequential. Jesus changed Peter and the Zebedee brothers' circumstances by making them catch fish, thereby demonstrating that when Jesus comes into one's life, the God Abraham encountered as providential, can provide in all ways and all situations.

Secondly, the PROVIDENCE of God:

By the GOSPEL, we encounter God, so *Jesus says, "whoever has seen me, has seen the father"* (John 14:9). In the Gospel we are told to be *born again*, literally, to have a new life. This new life, which would have God as the only one to be worshipped. We went into Akrampa, and gradually, by the spirit of God, led the people to turn to the living God, and not the man-made idol that sits at the entrance into the village. We endeavored to teach that when God comes into the day-to-day affairs of our lives, even our physical circumstances tend to change, as we intentionally introduced the tool of physical and social development, which is **education**.

THE AKRAMPA SCHOOL:

The God who provides, Jehovah Jireh, in Abrahamic narrative, through your giving, provided for the establishment of a school for the children of Akrampa and its environs. It can be said without any shred of doubt that to be uneducated is to live in the dark. Lack of education, or none of it, causes ignorance and the prophet says, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. . .*" (Hosea 4:6 AMPC.) So, we built a school in Akrampa, the benefits of which liberates the children from the darkness of ignorance, and positions them to function in this highly competitive world. Until the educational intervention, they had no hope of life and of breaking free from the darkness that imprisoned them in every way, particularly, social, economic, and cultural. The school is literally their door, their way out to having a meaningful life. Simply put, "Christ in them, the hope of glory". Needless to say, your giving, the financial support, provides the resources to support the ministry of the mission, on a monthly basis.

THE AKRAMPA SCHOOL MEALS:

In John's narrative that was read for us today, Jesus was followed by a multitude of 5,000 people. The Gospel that Jesus was telling them attracted them to Jesus. In consequence Jesus noticed that they were hungry. When we went into Akrampa with the Gospel, we realized that we had a unique opportunity to teach the children and the people to come to know Christ, the light and life of the world. Just as Christ noticed the hunger in the faces of the multitude who followed as a result of the attraction of the Gospel, we also saw the hunger in the faces of the little children of Akrampa, hence instituting the Breakfast (meals) Program.

Fred Kinsler, (may he RIP), after seeing the children's faces named them, the *Little Lambs*, and started donating substantially towards providing them with 5 meals per week. The numbers (of students) have grown every year, such that we are not able to provide the objective of 5 meals per week. We are now only able to do 3 meals per week. Needless to say, the support for the feeding of these children started in this church, with contributions from you, which was a fluid transition for FLC, because you were already doing the Food Pantry, and many other things to help the community of Lorain. **You already have the passion for feeding the hungry!!!** And, I applaud you for that. Yesterday, we heard *Pastor Shari* speak of you as a church with a mission, impacting your community. That you have not allowed the fire, the burning down of your celebrated church, to remove your passion for mission. This missionary enthusiasm has gone beyond your walls here, down into Akrampa over the past 30 years.

The narration in John is an indication that the church, you and I, are to provide for the hungry, because he said to Philip, (and I quote) "*Where are we to buy bread, so that all these people may eat?*" (John 6:5 AMPC). The challenge here is that the *Little Lambs* of Akrampa may not be your responsibility, in the sense that they are Ghanaian. But you didn't mind that at all, because you literally are responding to the mission statement of this church. You continue to give, because of your great sense of giving, and I fervently pray that you will not relent.

CONCLUSION:

Now, what is the point of all that I have said?

It is to reiterate that Akrampa needs your **continued support**.

Our **Ghana General Fund** and our **Ghana Meal Fund** support the mission with 100% of your donated money. Financial transfers are sent from FLC to Ghana every other month. None of our work in Ghana could continue without your ongoing support of these two funds. And I thank you again for your generosity!

We also now have an additional need for our Akrampa School:

The original school building, built by FLC, for the K-6th Grade, is 28+ years old and needs attention. The roof leaks badly, which creates unsafe conditions for the children during the two rainy seasons in Ghana. Also, the leaking water is slowly doing damage to the structure of the building. And most of the wooden windows and doors on this section of the school are broken and need to be repaired or replaced. This has created a security issue for the school buildings, as doors/windows cannot be fully closed and locked up at night, and also allow the elements to get inside.

We are literally asking and pleading for your continued help with Akrampa.

[There] a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man from Macedonia stood pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us!'

Acts 16:9 AMPC

The blessing of God be upon you all.

Amen.