

Updates: from Ohio & Ghana

Dear Friends,

My wife, Julie, and I have been in Ohio since early July 2024, and will return home to Ghana at the beginning of December. Pastor Jimmy continues to be our host, providing his usual hospitality and living out the values of true friendship.

In my last article I explained some of the specifics of this year's medical trip to Ohio. Dr. John Balk, and his surgical team (Mercy Health of Lorain) preformed a laminectomy surgery on my back. My hospital stay was an overnight thing: the surgery was on Thurs. Aug. 29<sup>th</sup> and I was released to go home the next day. Initially, the post-surgical pain was fairly severe requiring rest and pain medications. Julie took excellent care of me and tended to my needs during that difficult time. Pastor Jimmy helped me to stay in contact with my doctors and drove us to my follow-up appointments. I seriously started the physical therapy exercises the moment I realized that I could manage the pain levels, which over the period since discharge from the hospital, have lessened considerably. I am now able to walk (for exercise), and recently achieved a 3.4-mile walk, which I am so happy about.

Now that I am feeling much better, and our time in Ohio is quickly passing, Julie & I hope to be able to see as many of our friends as possible and talk with all of you. If you would like to chat, or make plans to get together, please give me a call on my Ohio cell phone. The number is: 440-541-4023. *This number is only valid for the time that we are in Ohio this year.* We were blessed that a member of the Ghana Committee loaned us this cell phone for our stay - thank you.

### **Akrampa's status - while I am in Ohio:**

While here, I have been regularly checking in on what is happening in Akrampa. As far as the school and its daily activities are concerned the indefatigable headteacher, Ms. Eva Mensah, is on top of issues leaving me no cause to worry at all. She is ensuring that the Wednesday School Worship Times, are strictly followed, even in my absence. As a matter of fact, worship time in Akrampa School, is on the weekly activities and is part of the curricula. Ghana does not separate 'religion and school' the way other countries often are required to do.

The Akrampa teachers are encouraged to lead the worship services, according to a roster set up by me, and supervised by the headteacher, *in my absence*. There is one teacher, Mr. George Mensah, who also happens to be an evangelist in one of the local non-Protestant churches - that leads in the weekly Worship Services when I am away. The enthusiasm of both staff & pupils is still high as they learn about and worship Jesus.

The Breakfast/Meals Program continues while I am in Ohio, led by my able assistant, Mrs. Mercy Abbeyquaye. Although slowing in age and hip problems, Mercy supervises the allocation of the food ingredients from the storage, the cooking of the meal (in our Kitchen Building) and the sharing of the meal to the students/learners. When it is time to share/distribute the meal, a teacher is appointed to oversee the cooking, with one or two other teachers assisting. We try to engage as many people/teachers as possible in all the activities of the school.

Currently, our Akrampa School continues to provide **three meals** per week to the students/learners in the school. At this time, the population of the school is made up of **255 boys, & 295 girls** -- making a total of **550 students**. (We also have 19 staff members.) This figure of 550 is on the official register of students/learners for the Akrampa School. But when it is mealtime, we encounter other hungry children waiting in line with regular students/learners pleading to be given food as well. Some of these are the younger siblings of our students *or* other very small children from the community. In a sense we have our 550 students, and **an additional 100+ small children**, in total, that are given food when we cook our three-times-a-week meal. The children in the community, both students/learners and those who are not students are given food to eat, particularly those who are **between the ages of 3 years old and 5 years old**. Our empathy reaches out to them when we see their hungry faces, so we find it difficult to turn them away.

This means that our Ghana Breakfast Program is now feeding over 650 children each, a meal, three times a week! We are not capable of doing this without your ongoing and unwavering financial support. Please pray for us and continue to give financially to help us feed and educate these amazing children. *Our Akrampa School is the only school in the district who continues to have a meal program for their students. This is a testament to your love for our mission and an outward expression of the love of Jesus for these students to see every week.*

Before coming to Ohio for my medical issues, all exterior work on the **new Kindergarten Building** in Akrampa, had been completed. This process was detailed in my: May 2024, May Pt. 2, and June/July articles. Upon my return to Ghana, I will be overseeing the process of acquiring the furniture (tables and chairs) for the classroom. The Ohio family who donated the money to finish the exterior of the building is also funding the purchase of the tables and chairs for the new Kindergarten Classroom. Then as soon as possible, we will have a dedication ceremony for the new Kindergarten Building and it will be officially in use for the students.

By now, most of you probably already know about our most exciting update for the Akrampa School. We are currently fundraising for new roof(s) for the oldest blocks/sections of the school. These are the two blocks of the school that house the (original) Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Classrooms. The roof(s) are between 24-29 years old, because they were built in stages. All of the roofs are leaking and need to be replaced, along with the doors and windows on these blocks of the school. The concrete structure of the school itself appears strong and intact, for now, but we could lose it if the roof(s) are not replaced. It is also unsafe for our students to sit in classrooms that leak when it rains.

*At the time I am writing this to you, we have already raised \$8,196. toward our goal of \$20,715. By the time you will read this, hopefully that total will be even higher. If you would like to read all of the details about the scope of this project, the full proposal is posted on the bulletin board at FLC, or can be acquired by calling the FLC church office.*

In conclusion, I wish to take the opportunity, once again, to thank all those who are supporting the Akrampa School and the children. Thank you!!!

Pastor Ben Wilson