

Dear Friends,

This will be the first letter to cherished readers upon our return to Ghana. Julie and I have now returned home to Ghana to our family and friends, who have been missing us. Likewise, we have missed them also, **especially our children!** We are so happy to return to our familiar environment, even though we would continue to miss the warmth of friendship that we enjoyed while staying in the US for nearly six months (July 2<sup>nd</sup> - December 9<sup>th</sup>). Every one of you contributed to our stay to make it congenial and conducive, to provide joy, comfort and fellowship. We thank you all so very much for touching us with your prayers, gifts in kind and cash, and sharing your life with us. We are particularly appreciative of Pastor Jimmy Madsen for accommodating us, once again. His home has been the only one that we live in anytime we are in the US, since November of 1993, my first visit, that resulted in being given a prosthetic right hip, which still appears to be functioning as best as expected.

Julie and I have just celebrated the 2024 annual American Thanksgiving (November 28, 2024) with you, and now have come home to take part in the celebration of the birth of Christ - universally regarded as Christmas - with our friends and family. It goes without saying that the tone and texture of Christmas celebrations, differ from place to place, and even country to country, and Ghana is not different. In our situation, it's not unusual to see local cultural influences manifesting in the celebrations. The real 'Christian' part of the celebration is when people flock to churches for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day church services. One can describe the celebrations as *festive* for the community, and *sacramental* for Christians.

Even as God gave his Son for us at Christmas, I can say that yet again through you, the church and Mercy Health of Lorain, Ohio, I received the gift of another health intervention, a lumbar surgery so I can continue to work for God. Before leaving finally, led by the director of Lorain County Free Clinic, Paul Baumgartner, Julie and I, accompanied by Pastor Jimmy Madsen, went to the Administrative Office of Mercy Health to say "Thank you", to express appreciation to the doctors and other personnel who were part of the process that provided services for my *lower back surgery*. As we walked down the corridors of the hospital, my mind went back to the first visit and the use of the facility for my hip surgery in December of 1993, thirty-one years ago. It was then known as Lorain Community Hospital. Presently, I am also deeply grateful to have received *cataract surgery* on both of my eyes during the 2024 visit to Ohio. I had a very skilled surgeon in Avon Ohio who performed the surgery for me. This will make driving at night over the horrible roads in Ghana so much easier for me. Thank you to everyone!

We left the US to return to Ghana on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> and arrived Tues. the 10<sup>th</sup>, welcomed at the airport by our children; anticipating great joy of returning home, only to be hit by a power outage in our home. We are normally used to the high temperatures in our environment, compared with that of the coolness of Ohio - which for us was really cold - to our Ghanaian hot weather.

But when we have no power in our home to make the fans work, to cool our sweating bodies, and the refrigerator to give us cold water to drink, even we find it very uncomfortable. Before we actually arrived home, we noticed afar off evidence of the entire community in which we live had been hit by a power outage. Our home, just like several other homes, was in total darkness. When we opened the door and entered the living room the heat that hit us made us immediately miss the coolness (cold) of Lorain. Right there and then we decided to go and sleep at our daughter Ida's home. We spent the the whole morning of Wednesday at her home and waited for news that power had been restored before we decided to leave in the afternoon for our own home.

### Ghana Roof Project Update:

During our time in Ohio, the decision was made to begin this wonderful fundraising for the Akrampa School's original two 'blocks' to receive new roofs, new doors and windows. Because I was physically in Ohio, I relied heavily on our most trusted Head Teacher at the Akrampa School to help me with making contact with contractors and fabricators to get our estimate for the project.

Upon my return home, I immediately prepared to meet with the Head Teacher of the school, and made arrangements to visit the local contractor and go to see the fabricator of the (metal) roofing sheets. We have agreed to a few items which I will report on more fully when the repair works on the roof begins. I will oversee every aspect of this project now that I am home.

Already there's great excitement in Akrampa at the news that the roofs, doors and windows are being replace and made totally new again. It is seen as raising the image to the school. Additionally, by adding onto the scope of the project and including gutters and large cisterns to create a rain catchment system, we are creating a practical and deeply needed benefit for both the school and the community. Clean water is in great demand as more people move into Akrampa for their children to attend our school. You cannot imagine how *great of a gift* you are giving to our school and community with your donations to this project!

In view of the 'Roof Project' and its significance I am personally humbled and also exceedingly happy at the response towards the fundraising. I wish to thank all who have made contributions and I'm trusting that others will also join the cause to save the building and the future of the school. Together we are creating a safe & happy future for the school, the children, and the community. WE couldn't do it without you! Thank you!

I will continue with the reporting as the following months unfold in the progress of replacing the roof. Please watch for my monthly articles for updates on this and other things that are happening in Akrampa.

God bless you all.  
Merry Christmas!  
Pastor Ben Wilson