

Dear Friends,

Thirty years in ministry and mission in Akrampa, Ghana:

This year, 2025, marks 30 years of this work of God in my own home country, Ghana. In many ways it was a choice and decision with help from Pastor Jimmy Madsen & Pastor Linwood (Woody) Chamberlain, with determined support from Dr. Denis Radefeld. They encouraged the congregation of First Lutheran Church, Lorain, to provide the financial support which has sustained our mission work for this length of time. This was a FAITH venture because the church launched out with me, trusting our Lord Jesus to provide the resources. The village of **Akrampa** was chosen, because the war in Liberia was still going on and there was no way I could go back there, with my wife Julie, to continue our work there as missionaries with the Lutheran Church in Liberia. I wrote more about why Akrampa was chosen in one of my older articles: *December of 2010* - if you'd like to go online and read more about it.

Prior to our arrival in Akrampa, the villagers practiced a religion of what is called: **Fetish, or Juju.** Fetish is loosely defined as:

Fetishism in religion refers to the belief that certain objects possess supernatural powers or are embodiments of spirits, often used in rituals to connect with the divine or ancestors. This practice is common in various cultures, where such objects are revered and treated with respect due to their perceived magical significance.

Through our teaching and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the fetish and worship of local deities, was gradually overcome. The people, and students of Akrampa came to acknowledge that **Jesus** is far mightier and more loving than their deities. Through the ministry of the Ghana Mission, we have been able to prove that Jesus cares about them so much as to liberate them from spiritual enslavement and to also provide resources for physical survival. One powerful example of this is the provision of the Akrampa School & education for the children. There is also the recent addition of Borehole well, and Cistern/Rain Catchment System as two new sources of clean water for their daily domestic use. By far, one of the biggest impacts of showing the physical love of Jesus to the children is the Breakfast Meal that we provide for the students at school three times a week! The impact on their lives is awesome!

From the time I returned home, in 1994 from my first trip to Ohio, till our mission officially began in 1995, the CONGREGATION of First Lutheran Church (Lorian) were the sole supporters of our Mission. Your love, prayers, and donations were the foundation of what has made this mission what it is today. And that great love from FLC still sustains us today! Thank you!

In 2017, for the very first time in all those years, the Ghana Mission gained a partner. Via Pastor Jimmy's professional and personal relationship with the congregation of **Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church**, in Bay Village Ohio - it came to be that Bethesda joined us as our first partner in the Ghana Mission. Under the leadership of **Pastor Angela Freeman**, Bethesda has become a trusted friend and a place of great support for all aspects of our Mission.

Pastor Angela Freeman has written some of her thoughts to share with us:

"Bethesda on the Bay has been very grateful to have a small part of supporting the ministry in Akrampa over the last seven plus years. Getting to know our siblings in faith at First Lutheran, as well as Pastor Ben and Julie, and learning about the teachers, staff, and students in the Akrampa School, has enhanced our lives and deepened our faith in Jesus. Bethesda is located in a sleepy quiet little corner of the world along Lake Erie, and it is so good for the soul and the heart to be connected with fellow members of the Body of Christ near and far. Members of Bethesda have a deep passion for hunger ministries and ensuring that all of God's people receive the daily bread they need. In particular, the congregation has sought to support the breakfast program at the School in Akrampa. We look forward to continuing the relationships and supporting the important work of Pastor Ben and the school staff. May God continue to bless them as they do the good work and care for the community in Akrampa!"

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you our NEWEST partner in the Ghana Mission: **TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, VERMILION OHIO!**

Trinity Lutheran Church decided to become a partner in our mission officially in 2025. My wife, Julie, and I were blessed to be able to visit Trinity Lutheran with Pastor Jimmy, in the fall of 2024, when we were in Ohio. We immediately loved the congregation and church, and we are so happy that they have now joined us as partners!

Sandy Dovala - Parish Administrator at Trinity Lutheran shares some of her thoughts:

"Trinity Lutheran is thankful to begin to partner with First Lutheran and Bethesda on the Bay for the Ghana Mission. Inspired by Pastor Ben's message in 2024, we felt called to expand our international giving to the mission in Akrampa. Trinity is in Vermilion, Ohio, the largest small boat harbor on the Great Lakes, with 3,000 slips along the Vermilion River and Lagoons. We were established as a mission congregation in 1957 and built our current building on Lake Road in 1963, where we continue to worship and share Christ in our community.

Our congregation is currently in a discernment period, with Rev. Henry Zorn as our pastoral presence and Rev. Jimmy Madsen as our pastor of record. Trinity has a renewed outlook and is living out our mission with opened eyes ready to experiment and try new things in our worship life by welcoming both lay and rostered leaders to lead our worship services, as well as finding new ways to proclaim Christ throughout our local, regional, national and international communities by empowering our membership to deepen their discipleship and to be the Church in the world through their gifts and skills. We are thankful for this new opportunity and extending our community with First Lutheran and Bethesda on the Bay". To learn about our Giving Project initiative and outreach missions, please visit. trinityvermillion.org/trinitymissionemphasis

And now a final closing word to our article from the lead Pastor of First Lutheran Church, Lorain: Pastor Shari Ayers shares her thoughts with us:

"One of the great things about beginning my call at First Lutheran in the fall of 2024 was the fact that Pastor Ben and Julie were in Lorain for several months. It is always wonderful to celebrate the mission work of a congregation. By definition, that is usually ministry that takes place elsewhere and we can come to view the work of the Holy Spirit only from a distance.

In this case, though, Pastor Ben and Julie helped to bring the ministry in Akrampa into sharper, grace-filled focus. The Holy Spirit is always nudging us onward and outward. I'm grateful to the vision of First Lutheran Church in the past, as well its passion in the present for this ministry. Thanks to the hardworking Ghana Committee and the tireless work of Pastor Ben and Julie and so many others. I think of this verse every time I see the photos of the school and the Borehole well: The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like springs of water, whose waters never fail. (Isaiah 58:11)."

Thank you to each of our ministry partners: FLC, Bethesda, & Trinity!

Thank you to every individual who has prayed for & contributed to the Ghana Mission!
Blessings, Pastor Ben Wilson