

Dear Friends,

In the past two recent articles – interviews with Pastor Jimmy Madsen and **with me** – conducted by Kristen Anthony, some insights were shared with our readership to know a little more about the history and philosophical basis of the Mission in Akrampa. In this article, I want to answer some questions that were sent to me by an older gentleman from Bethesda, who has strived to *intentionally* raise awareness about our Ghana Mission for many years now. His questions to me focus on what I do on regular basis, as I minister among the people in the communities: village & school, of Akrampa.

What I do on any given day spent in Akrampa & what would a typical day be for me?

Due to the cost of fuel - to & from Akrampa - I normally go there three times a week: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday. Where/when I need to travel additionally for the needs of the mission, regarding anything else, that is always scheduled. **Mondays** are set aside for visiting individuals and homes to share the Word of God. **Wednesdays** are for School Worship with the children, and related activities, at the school. On **Fridays** I visit each classroom (all nine of them), Kindergarten through 9th Grade, one after the other, to interact with the students. We also serve the Breakfast Meal to all of the children on Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Typical Day? There is a vast difference between what Akrampa was like then, and now, thirty years later. Then, Akrampa, was a village exclusively inhabited by the indigenous natives. Now it has become larger, a town, with non-natives building their homes and businesses and living among them. So, it is now a metropolitan environment. Because the circumstances and environment have changed, the strategy adopted now, to interact with the community, particularly with the *teachers, parents, and especially the students*, is more **intentional**. The reality now, of my **intentional one-on-one evangelism**, in contrast to years ago, (when I used to bring them all together in the tiny old *shed* which I built for both the first mission classroom and chapel) NOW consists of these three things: ~ 1). That I visit individuals/homes randomly selected & have conversations with them using the Word of God (the Bible) to apply to their situation. 2). When I am approached by any adult (teacher/parent) who wants my intervention of any kind I try to use the Bible as the reference, picking examples to help them have faith in God so they can trust God in everything. 3). Then, when I observe and perceive that an individual needs to have some counseling to sort out that challenge, I invite myself to sit down and have a conversation, always using practical Biblical approaches.

How do I teach the students about Jesus, and what methods are used?

While I share the Word of God with the adults/teachers/parents individually using real life situational encounters, whenever possible, (as described above), teaching the children takes a different approach.

The students are brought together **once every week** (Wednesdays) for what we refer to as **School Worship**. This is the main medium by which the children are taught about Jesus & the Bible. During School Worship, the learning of songs and hymns, coupled with one-on-one counseling sessions, form the main approach to applying the Word of God. Memorization and recitation of Scripture is encouraged during the School Worship periods, and also in the classrooms.

Early in the mission work, I would teach the Bible and lead the times of worship all alone, but as the population of the students grew, and the gathering of the whole school (including the Junior High School) at School Worship became more challenging, teachers took turns helping me (as lay preachers) to share the Word of God, using a setup I have designed, that guides them as to **what and how** to preach the Word of God. The goal of this arrangement is to lead each child to have a **personal encounter** with the Lord Jesus Christ, to be saved, and made **heaven-ready**, that by doing so may provide the necessary tools for matured Christian living as an adult when they grow up. This approach is one of the methods by which we share the Word of God. The other method is in the curriculum that the government has developed for teaching of religions in schools. Akrampa subscribes to that aspect designed for teaching **Christian Education** in Ghanaian schools, and that is what we also use.

How do the students, parents/teachers/community respond to the teaching of the Bible?

Over my years of teaching the Word of God, both to the parents and the students, we have seen a **growing response to the Word of God** evidenced by parents and children, becoming members of local Christian churches that we have encouraged them to attend. This is a community which used to be totally committed to 'worshipping of *idols of their forbears*.'

Now the Word of God is recognized and followed.

The Lutheran Missouri Synod has always been very prevalent in Ghana. And so, in the beginning, Pastor Jimmy & Pastor Woody firmly suggested that I focus **only** on preaching to the people of Akrampa & the students. Then I encourage people/families to join any of the local Bible-believing churches. Simply meaning, I am not appointed to establish an ELCA congregation in Akrampa, Ghana. Currently, not the entire community, but some families upon hearing the Word of God, chose to become Christian and began attending church. The glad news is that I can say for certain that their worship of the **local god/idol has fallen to as low as 15%**, compared with what it was like in the early 1990's.

These Christian churches are located in, and around, the community of Akrampa. The interesting **phenomenon** is that because there was *no established church in Akrampa, at the start of the mission*, no one family belonged to any church, Protestant, Pentecostal, or charismatic. Over time, and when eventually they chose which churches they wanted to attend, non-Protestant churches (Pentecostal, Charismatic) were their preference, where the worship style appealed to them.

How do I personally, or ‘we’ the Mission, help the people of Akrampa with their day-to-day needs?

Helping all of the community with their **day-to-day needs** is now almost impossible. I am now being selective with how I respond to any need presented to me. It was easy in the beginning because I was dealing with a few people. We used to help the adults in the village to adopt the tool of **self-help** by providing them with skills that would lead them out of poverty: economic emancipation, we called it. Training in baking bread to sell, usage of local materials to make jewelry (some which were sent over to be sold in First Lutheran Church), also training some of the children to become artisans by learning trades, earlier in life than when they’d have access to that teaching in school. I took care of their medical needs, provided school kits, including footwear and uniforms, for the students, with resources provided by mission supporters.

Many adults in the community have no specific jobs that reward them with wages at the end of the month, especially the indigenous homes. Remember that Akrampa people lived off the land. They are agrarian, and 90% of them still live off the land, therefore they do not receive any pay, or wages.

Some of the newer people who have recently moved into the Akrampa area have jobs where they work in towns or cities outside of Akrampa, like the capital city of Ghana, Accra. People are now beginning to recognize Akrampa as a good place to bring their family to live, primarily due to our Akrampa School and the Breakfast Program.

All our additional mission efforts to help the indigenous adults of Akrampa to become more self-sustaining, and independent have stopped because the funds are no longer available for provision of such needs, especially for so many. Now all attention is on finding ways and means of sustaining the mission for the children; their teaching, care, and the ***Breakfast Program***, which is of the utmost importance. The children are the future of Akrampa and of Ghana. Most parents, teachers and even missionaries – from any country in the world – want to raise children who will be educated, independent, and if we can teach them how to provide for themselves when they become adults, we create a better society for all.

Our Akrampa students literally depend on the Breakfast Program. More than 65 percent of the children look forward to this as their ***main meal*** for the day, during the week!

Please do not confuse this to mean that for every student it is their only meal.

Many indigenous Akrampa homes do ensure that their children are fed some food, at least twice a day. But our mission’s *Akrampa School Breakfast Program* provides a dependable, ongoing meal that the parents can rely on, ***no matter what their circumstances may be at home.***

The people of Ghana are proud, and hardworking, and they want to provide for their children!! They do the best that they can in all difficult circumstances. Our mission, and our Breakfast Program is a support system, and a help to the both the children and the parents.

When I refer to some homes as indigenous, I am referring to the natives and not to other people from other places who have come to live among the Akrampa people. Thus, when I talk about **main** meal, I am referring to children of the **natives** whose parents still struggle to eke something from the almost depleted land which is no longer producing as it used to. They get less, & less produce to sell at the local market, & less to care for themselves and their children.

Every single student – from Kindergarten to 9th Grade – is fed 3 times a week with our school Breakfast Program, regardless of their parents' job or financial status – no questions asked, ever. WE – myself, the teachers, and the Ghana Committee believe that every child in our care, at the school, is equal and we will continue to feed every single child for as long as the program has support from our donors in the USA.

Each month, the mission sends **\$2,100.** for the Breakfast Program. At the time of writing this article, that money now must feed **592+ students**, who attend school on a regular basis; grades Kindergarten through 9th. This means for each student, it costs an average of **\$3.54**. Divide this across the **12 meals a month**, per child, and that means each meal costs around **\$0.29 - \$0.30**.

30 Cents per child/per meal is unfortunately grossly inadequate, and does not at all account for the ever-growing population of our Akrampa School, and global inflation on prices of food.

I don't want to say anything further regarding how difficult it is to shop and prepare **quality, healthy meals**, three times a week for the children, with the means to use around **30 Cents** per meal, per child. We are grateful and blessed to be able to do what we can to support the children and the community. We are currently the only school in the district that feeds anything to their students at school, at all. I wish we could provide more for them, in all honesty.

Additionally, the mission sends money each month from our *Ghana Main Fund*, that pays for all the other needs that are required to run the mission, outside of just the Breakfast Program. *There are often months where the Ghana Committee is in prayer with me, at the end of the month, just praying that we have enough money to send to cover the entire transfer.* Having enough money in both our **Ghana Main Fund**, and also our **Ghana Breakfast Fund** at the end of each month, to cover the regular, needed bank transfer is Not a given, nor a certainty.

The entire Ghana Mission is funded entirely by YOUR donations! We are blessed now to have the support of Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran and Trinity Lutheran. If you attend First Lutheran, Bethesda or Trinity, please ask your Pastor, leadership, or the Ghana Committee what is the best way that you can give individually to help the Ghana Mission and our students in Akrampa.

Your prayers for our students, and for the overall mission are also greatly appreciated.

I sincerely hope that this would bring enlightenment and strengthening of your commitment to our shared mission work in Akrampa. **You make all of this possible – past & future.**

May the Lord bless you abundantly and replenish you.

Pastor Ben Wilson