

Dear Friends,

Recently, as I have been recovering at home from the March 29th surgery that was performed on my spine, (here in Ghana) I have been working on developing a new program to help our Akrampa students. Under direct orders from my surgeon, I was not allowed to drive and required extensive rest and physical therapy to allow the new titanium implants to correctly fuse to my spine. One advantage of living in our current times, is that working in a 'hybrid' sense, via phone and internet can still be a very productive way to accomplish goals. During my recovery time, I was in constant contact with Eva, the Headteacher at our Akrampa School to supervise the ongoing Mission initiatives. And I began working remotely with the teachers and parents to strategize and develop a new program. The mental, physical and Spiritual health of our Akrampa students is always on my heart, even as I was recovering from my own major surgery.

Now, it is September and **I have been officially cleared by my surgeon to return to work** in a physical sense, including my ability to drive. Shortly before writing this article, I was able to return to Akrampa for the first time in many months. It was wonderful to see all of the precious faces of the students and to spend time with both the teachers and the students again.

As you may have noted from the title of this article, I will be talking about a more challenging topic than normal. Before our Mission School was built, Akrampa was a forgotten place, a neglected society – lacking all of the basic things needed to survive. Akrampa was not just lacking a school and fresh running water, but they also lacked reliable & significant ways to earn an income (for adults). Although over the years, our Mission has created a thriving school, provided fresh water, breakfast meals for students, and the Gospel of Jesus – there are *still significant challenges* for the **adults** of Akrampa to find ways/places to work and provide for their families. As many of the parents *work tirelessly* on their farms, or selling produce at the market, for little money – this has left many children home alone, when they are not at school.

Akrampa children, since the establishment of our school, have posed a peculiar challenge to the teachers in the school because of the environment of their upbringing. Due to long work hours, many of the parents have been unable to devote an adequate amount of time to supervising and teaching their children, even things like simple etiquette and discipline. In fact, it seems as if some of the children are left to choose their own path as they grow up.

Outside of school hours, some of the children are left to fend for themselves while the parents go into the forest (to gather wood to sell), to tend their farms, or to the market to sell farm produce, leaving the child free to wander around till the parents return home. While the parents are away from home, the child can then be influenced by older siblings or other older children, from whom all manner of misbehavior is learned.

It is my firm belief, which is shared by our teachers, that these behaviors are from older children who are delinquents and who are transferring their bad 'character' on to vulnerable minors. We are determined to confront all manner of indiscipline and antisocial behavior, which are causing teachers great concern and very worrying because it affects the 'teaching and learning' atmosphere in the school.

For these reasons, *and the overall concern for the health and wellbeing of all of our students*, I have spent most of my surgical recovery time working together (via phone & internet) with the school administration to develop a new program to help our students.

I have decided that we as the school, and the community, will confront the challenges posed by indiscipline of any sort and or moral issues stemming from any child, by setting up a new **Counseling Unit for our Akrampa School**.

As we begin to implement our newly developed **Counseling Unit**, I intend to approach the challenges the children are facing in these ways ...

The Akrampa Counseling Unit will:

- Consist of 4 teachers – 2 male and 2 female
- Among the teachers, there is one who has a degree in Psychology and Counseling, who I have appointed as the Convener and Facilitator of the Counseling Unit.
- The Counseling Unit will also have 2 parents, with myself as the Chair
- The 2 parents are members of the PTA (Parent and Teachers Association) of the school.
- The main goal (what we will be doing) is to address the indiscipline and behavior challenges of the children and provide necessary help with counseling and support.

We do **not** consider the children as 'bad' children. It is widely recognized that counseling can be helpful to both children and adults alike. We will be focusing this Counseling Unit on our students. It is concerning when we find that children in our school are behaving poorly and acting out in ways that can negatively affect their educational benefits, and those of their classmates.

Such children are 'troubled' and therefore need the help that can be provided with counseling. We consider this approach as an opportunity to show God's love to our students by not only providing them with education, but also by guiding them to choose helpful paths for their future.

We have set aside a room, with furniture, that will function as the *Counseling & Therapy Room*. We hope that this very necessary intervention will help us to provide and sustain the conducive **teaching and learning** conditions for the entire school which will also improve relationship(s) and collaboration with parents in providing comprehensive education for the children.

Thank you for joining us in providing wholistic education to the children of Akrampa.

- Pastor Ben Wilson