

Dear Friends of the Ghana Mission,

In the previous two months of articles, (August & September) we have been reading the voices of past & present leadership, Pastors and ministry partners who are all integral to the Ghana Mission. September's article was an interview with Pastor Jimmy, and due to the very positive responses we received from that, we decided to give Pastor Ben an opportunity to answer some of the same questions, in somewhat of a follow-up article. We hope that you enjoy reading it.

And now, our interview with Pastor Ben - Missionary Pastor, Ghana, Africa:

Question:

When you began the mission in 1995, did you personally have any specific hopes, dreams, or goals for what the mission would become in the future? Please share those with us.

Pastor Ben's answer:

As a Christian, my dream is the same as all followers of the Lord Jesus Christ who has called us as His disciples to go into all nations to make more disciples for Him. My hope in the beginning of the Ghana Mission was that in executing this agenda, the Holy Spirit would strengthen me to do what the Lord has primarily ordained me to do.

In pursuing that agenda, my goal was basically to raise a community of disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ, in Akrampa; which grew & turned out to be the school that has been established for the children of Akrampa. The school was never initially in my mind as part of the missionary effort. It just happened, and it has become the success story of the mission. In the school we see the future of the mission as the children are developing into generations of a people redeemed from darkness into the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question:

What is your favorite memory or story about Pastor Jimmy?

Also, please share with us a little bit about the impact that your long-standing friendship with Pastor Jimmy has had on you, and on your wife, Julie.

Pastor Ben's answer:

The Rev. Jimmy Madsen was the first person from the First Lutheran Church to visit Akrampa and my family, in Ghana, in 1995. Our relationship with Pastor Jimmy started on November 8, 1993, when a total stranger (me), having survived the carnage of the Liberian war that started back in 1990, was sponsored by a group of friends led by Dr. Denis Radefeld to receive medical treatment for a degenerated hip, in the United States. A total hip replacement surgery was performed by a colleague doctor of Dr. Radefeld, Dr. Kolczun, in Lorain OH. From that date in November 1993, I have always been welcomed into Pastor Jimmy's home, as if it were my own home - whether I was in Ohio by myself or on other visits with my wife Julie.

My favorite memory of Pastor Jimmy is when he encouraged the First Lutheran Church, Lorain to provide a two-kilometer-long pipeline to give good, clean drinking water for the people of Akrampa. The relationship we have with Pastor Jimmy has impacted our lives in such a way that, after being on the receiving end of his kindness for so many years, it's even more encouraging for us to be able to share as much as we have with others.

Question:

Now that you have been the Missionary Pastor for Akrampa for the last 30 years, and you have endured many things both happy & sad with the people; what are your hopes, dreams and goals for the Mission for the next 5 Years - 2025-2030?

Pastor Ben's answer:

One of my dreams is being realized. Over the years, with the construction & establishment of an ever-growing school directly in Akrampa, which is now becoming a beacon for their community, a generation of educated children is growing up to avail themselves of the many opportunities in society for educated young people. Before we started the mission work, any child from Akrampa who was lucky enough to receive an education, was sent far away to live with a relative to attend school. Now there is a Kindergarten through 9th Grade school on their doorstep, in Akrampa!

It is my hope that the essential needs of the children & the school will continue to be met and sponsored, as they have been for the last 30 years. Also, it is my hope that the Junior High School, (7th-9th Grade), will have their current needs of infrastructural support and repairs taken up by our donors from Ohio & the United States in 2026. The Government of Ghana built the Junior High School, in Akrampa, around 2015, but they will not be back to do any needed repairs. That will fall on the community of

*Akrampa, which will hopefully receive assistance from the Ghana Mission. Our Junior High School Students are already a part of our **breakfast program**, and the older students also enjoy the use of the water coming from the new **borehole well** and the **cistern**, because the JHS is on the same compound as the Primary School.*

My goal is that the children of Akrampa will receive not only education but to know the Lord Jesus Christ as each person's Lord and Savior, while growing into mature Christian people.

Question:

How has being the Missionary Pastor for the Ghana Mission helped you, or changed you, in your own personal walk of faith with Jesus Christ?

Pastor Ben's answer:

For me, being a Missionary Pastor, is a responsibility, not a privilege. The Lord Jesus has charged all Christians to propagate the Gospel everywhere and yet make disciples for Jesus. It is a responsibility that is honorable because at the end of it all I might stand before the Lord to be rewarded with, "welcome, good and faithful servant." This responsibility has taught me to be humble and dependent on the Lord Jesus for grace to execute His agenda. I have encountered real challenges (financial, health, material, etc.) that really tested my faith, but at the right time the Lord always provided.

Thank you, Pastor Ben, for your answers!

With many thanks to all who pray for and support our Ghana Mission:

Kristen Anthony - Ghana Committee Chair

****If you missed Pastor Jimmy's interview in last month's article, keep reading, below. Pastor Jimmy's interview is re-printed, here, for you.**

A short interview with our special guest: Pastor Jimmy!

Question:

After meeting Pastor Ben for the very first time in 1993, when he came to Ohio for a hip surgery; what was the inspiration for you & Pastor Woody to create the Ghana Mission and to enter into a ministry partnership with Pastor Ben, in his home country of Ghana?

Pastor Jimmy's answer:

*When we first met Pastor Ben, we had not dreamed of starting a mission in Ghana. We thought we were simply helping a young Pastor get a surgery that would enable him to work again. It was when his return to Ghana drew near that we and other leaders of the congregation began to wonder if it was possible to establish an ongoing relationship with him. He is an ordained Methodist Pastor, but he had been working as a teacher with Lutherans in Liberia until the civil war forced him and Julie to flee for their lives. We hoped that his Lutheran connections might open the door for him to become an official Lutheran missionary in Ghana and that we at First Lutheran Church could be a support congregation for him along with other congregations. As it turned out, the ELCA has no mission congregations in Ghana, and another expression of the Lutheran church works in Ghana. That's when we began to think about raising the money needed to support him on our own. We encouraged him to look for a place that could benefit from Christian mission work and some people in Ghana pointed him toward the very backward and marginalized village of **Akrampa**.*

The people of First Lutheran Church raised the money to make it happen and they are still supporting this vital ministry today along with some new partners at Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran Church in Bay Village and Trinity Lutheran Church in Vermilion.

Question:

What is your favorite memory or story about Pastor Ben and/or his wife Julie?
Also, please share with us a little bit about the impact of your long-standing friendship with Pastor Ben ...

Pastor Jimmy's answer:

Finding a favorite story is difficult. Pastor Ben & Julie have been long-term guests in my home several times. We cooked and cleaned house together and enjoyed a lot of laughter. One thing I will never forget is the extreme cold in January of 1994. Keep in mind that people in most parts of Ghana, except for a mountainous area, think that seventy degrees Fahrenheit is cold. If I remember correctly, we recorded the coldest temperature ever in Lorain that year. I believe it was minus twenty degrees Fahrenheit. Pastor Ben was in my guest bedroom with an electric blanket beneath him and another one over him and other blankets over that. It was only much later that I found out that bedroom is much colder than the rest of my house when the door is closed. He must have thought he was going to freeze to death. I know they would much prefer to visit here in the summer. We have developed a deep and lasting friendship for which I will always be grateful.

Question:

How has being a part of the Ghana Mission for more than 30 years helped you, or changed you, in your own personal walk of faith with Jesus Christ?

Pastor Jimmy's answer:

This adventure with the Ghana Mission has deepened my appreciation for the work of the Holy Spirit. We could never have dreamed this up on our own. If we had thought about it too much, we would surely have talked ourselves out of it. Pastor Ben, and the opportunities for mission work in the name of Jesus, were dropped into our laps. It was as if God was saying, "now do something with this." It has all come together like the pieces of a complex puzzle that we would never have been able to accomplish if it were not for the Holy Spirit working in, with and under to make it happen. And it is so very wonderful to see what has happened in Akrampa. It was a backward village that was ostracized, had no safe source of drinking water, worshiped an idol and where almost none of the children went to school. It now has multiple sources of drinking water, people of faith, a school that educates hundreds and a reputation that is attracting others to want to live near it. It is nothing short of amazing. Thanks be to God.

Also, if you have missed any of Pastor Ben's previous articles, you can catch up online. Pastor Ben has spent years, writing the entire story of the Ghana Mission, in Akrampa, from the very beginning of the story, till current; with new articles every month.

We are grateful that both of our partner churches in the mission have each posted **ALL** of Pastor Ben's articles online. Now you have your choice to visit either of these websites to catch up on his articles, past and present. Both webpages are beautiful, easy to navigate, and offer a great way to learn more about Pastor Ben and the Ghana Mission.

Please visit these exact websites, online.

www.trinityvermilion.org/ghanamission

www.bethesdaonthebay.org/ghana