

Stephen & Jacob - How our mission helped them

Dear Friends,

Once again, I bring you greetings from Akrampa and my family. In Ghana, it's the rainy season at this time of the year and the period that many of us, who live along the coast and in low-lying areas, dread each year. Certainly, the rains bring joy to farmers and fishermen. To the farmers, the land which has been prepared and sowed with seeds need the rains to produce fruit. This brings joy to the hearts of those who tilled the hard ground, with their backs breaking at the hewing of trees to make way for planting and cultivation of food crops. This means that between August and early September the food crops, such as corn and cassava and plantain, will be plentiful in the markets accompanied by vegetables needed for the sauces and the soups. Also, for the fishermen, the good and adequate rainfalls are a signal that a bumper harvest of fish are in store for them and all of us.

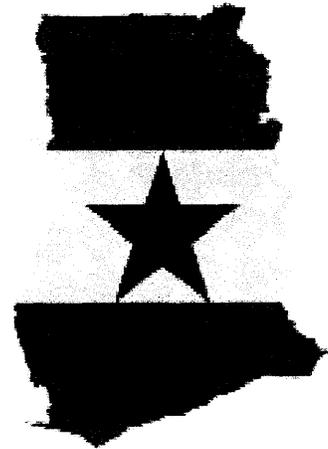
Sadly though, many of us are also filled with the unpleasant thought that the rains cause a lot of damage, including loss of property and lives. There has been flooding in the past and it may happen again, because the people have nowhere to relocate and therefore are at the mercy of the attendant floods. The gutters fill up, many rivulets become streams, and the waters find their own way with destructive force. The country's situation unfortunately, is attributed to the indiscipline in the society: the mismanagement of waste and trash which instead of being put away properly, are thrown into the gutters and places where the waters are able to move it from place to place. Even as I write it is raining quite heavily and I am anxious about Julie and the children coming home from work!!!

In this article I have chosen to write about two of the boys, **Stephen and Jacob**, now young men themselves, - who, like Diana have benefited from our missionary effort in Akrampa. These young men have also experienced transformations and had their lives impacted as a result of the work that started here some 25 years ago. Our mission is touching the physical lives as well as the spiritual lives of the people - in different ways for each person. (If you missed my article about Diana, see the online Ghana Archive and look for my April 2019 article.)

Stephen is now 27 years of age and has become established as a vehicle mechanic. (If you would like to read the first article that I wrote about Stephen, see the online Ghana Archive; look for my October 2012 article.)

When Stephen finished the 9th Grade, he was compelled by circumstances to enter into vocational training, by apprenticeship, at from an established vehicle repair shop popularly known in Ghana as 'fitting shop'. The people who work there called by the name 'fitter'. His first challenge was not passing the national examination that would have him admitted into secondary school (10th to 12th grade). The second obstacle was that his parents didn't have the resources to help him better his results to enter secondary school, so he opted for vocational training to become a 'fitter' (vehicle mechanic). When FLC's Fred Kinsler (may he rest in peace) read Stephen's story in my past Lectern article, he decided to support Stephen's efforts by giving the finances for Steven to purchase a box full of the requisite tools he needed for his training (apprenticeship). That was a great help, because it was beyond Stephen's means to acquire the tools for himself. He would always have to borrow from his colleagues, or from his boss, and most times that didn't work out well in becoming proficient as a trainee 'fitter'. He was so happy and very grateful for the gift of tools from Mr. Kinsler.

As I followed Stephen's performance after he received the gift of tools, I realized that it was just what he needed to make a headway in his training. Now he has set up his own shop where he repairs vehicles! Usually, such a set up is a very small place (sometimes by the wayside) where a vehicle can drive in and get a quick fix of a fault, hence the name, 'fitter'. People like Stephen take awhile to be established, but then they in turn become masters/bosses and have apprentices under them who receive training in that trade.



The education Stephen received up through 9th grade helped him to be able to have this training, so he can fend for himself in life. If it were not for the Akrampa school, and the help of good people in Lorain Ohio, he may not have achieved this success.

Jacob, our next young man, is now 23 years old. His story is a sad one, because he dropped out of school. Jacob started on a very promising note, so we were moved to help him out of his peculiar situation. Jacob's parents didn't live in Akrampa, but in another town about 40 miles from Akrampa. His parents lived and worked on their farm, and when Jacob wasn't in school he would be with his parents, helping on the farm.

Most of the time Jacob's parents had very poor yields on their farm, and they were unable to support him, requiring him to make the money for school fees. When we got him to tell his story and the difficulties he faced, he was blessed to have a sponsorship from Debbie and her husband. Jacob was a hardworking student, whenever he was able to be in school, who took his studies seriously.

Jacob's parents seemed to make him stay on the farm more and more, obviously because they couldn't do without him, as he was the eldest child. We did not have a close relationship with his parents since they lived out of town. Even if we had, our situation was such that we were not in the position to assume full responsibility for him. Jacob's story is so sad because there were good people who wanted to help him, and he was very smart, but the situations of his family life were out of our control and led to him dropping out of school.

In recent times we have come across children with needs like Jacob's. But we have had to stop short of taking over so they don't become a responsibility that we don't have the resources to sustain. This raises the pertinent question: could it be that one or more of such children with the potential of fulfilling their divine destiny are not able to do so just for lack of finances?

I have mentioned in another article that the current government has introduced what is known as 'fee-free education' for all school-age children, up to the end of secondary education level. This has brought a great relief to many parents and has caused huge increases in the number of students admitted into secondary school. But even with the relief from the actual 'school fees' there are still quite a significant number of children who lack the financial support for the required school uniforms and other relevant needs.

Over the years, a number of families from FLC have donated money to the Ghana mission specifically designated to have school uniforms made for those children who are in need. There are always children in need. Also, as part of the "Ghana General Fund", there is a small amount of money sent each month to help with the most urgent needs of school supplies and miscellaneous items for some of these children. Every dollar that is sent to Ghana in some way impacts the children and their lives.

Although Stephen and Jacob's stories had very different outcomes, they both demonstrate how the Ghana mission, the congregation of FLC and some very special people, have been willing to step up and help the children of Akrampa.

Our need for continued prayer for the Lord to provide and meet the needs that we continue to encounter, is ever greater. The needs are great, and constant. The appeal and reminder were made in my last article, that if you are able to give on a monthly basis, or just occasionally, every dollar is a wonderful gift! We cannot continue to minister spiritually or physically to the children and adults in Akrampa without your help.

Please pray! And please give financially if the Lord puts it on your heart.

Thank you again and again,

Blessings, Pastor Ben

In month of May, FLC provided over 3150 breakfasts to children and teachers in our mission in Akrampa, Ghana. See this week's eblast or "Ghana News" on the bulletin board for further details. Thank you for your faithful support.