

Additional history of the Akrampa School -

Dear Friends,

Let me begin with a portion of one of my earliest articles to you - that I wrote in 2010 - as I was just beginning to tell the story of Akrampa. This month's article will include some samples of my older articles, mixed with additional details about the Akrampa School that will hopefully be interesting to you.

*I returned to Ghana (from Ohio) in April of 1994 to our town of Saltpond. While waiting to hear from First Lutheran about the missionary job, I was asked by the Lutheran Church in Liberia to assist the Lutheran refugees who had gathered at the refugee camp in Ghana, near the capital of Accra. The refugees were trying to organize themselves into a congregation. So, every Sunday I would go there from Saltpond (a distance of 59 miles) by public transportation to preach and have Communion with them. I did this from July of 1994 till December of 1994. By this time, I had been given the job of Missionary Pastor to First Lutheran. But, in early December, a young woman who knew about **Akrampa** suggested that I visit there and assess the chances of doing work there. According to her, Akrampa was a neglected place, that seemed so remote from civilization, even though it was only three kilometers from a town that seemed to be an average, modern town. I went to see Akrampa and discussed my findings with Dr. Elike Takyi, who had been appointed Administrator of the FLC Mission in Ghana. We told FLC about Akrampa and were blessed to start work there in January of 1995.*

The Akrampa School didn't just happen! It was something that evolved as a *wish* from some parents of Akrampa. As some of you would recall, upon my return to Ghana from Ohio, it was obvious that I couldn't go back to Liberia, to the Lutheran Training Institute (LTI) to continue work as a Teacher/Missionary after the hip surgery. Officially, the Liberian Civil war was still going on - war that started in the last days of 1989, led by Charles Taylor, the rebel leader. He sought to overthrow the elected government of Samuel Kanyon Doe, starting from the north of the country, the part in which the mission activities of the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL), predominated. In this part of Liberia, were three very key mission posts: the biggest Mission Hospital, located in Gbarnga, Bong County; the biggest Mission School, located in Salayea (where Julie & I had served), and the relatively smaller Mission Hospital in Zorzor. The School - in Salayea, Lofa County - and the Hospital - in Zorzor, in Lofa County - were both to the west of Gbarnga, towards Sierra Leone. Dr. Stull (of Iowa, whose picture used to hang in the lobby of the burnt chapel), served in all of these three mission posts and was a colleague of Dr. Elike Takyi. I hope many of you still remember my story that started with Dr. Elike Takyi, who got in touch with Dr. Stull, who then spoke with Dr. Denis Radefeld (all of blessed memory) during a mission event in Minnesota, and Dr. Radefeld brought my case to FLC. The rest is history.

This situation of our inability to return to Liberia was discussed by Dr. Denis Radefeld, with Pastor(s) Linwood (Woody) Chamberlain and James (Jimmy) Madsen. They believed, with me, that something could be done in my own native country of Ghana, something **unique** - which is what Akrampa School has become.

Pastor Jimmy came to Ghana and dedicated the Mission in 1995. Our school started with 18 children, a motley of ages, with some even too old to be in Grade 3, yet desiring to be in school. In Ghana, children may start primary education at 5 years old, but most people send their children to start when they are 6 years of age. I noticed a few of the children who would cry, running after their friends and brothers and sisters when they left the village to go to school in the big town, an indication that they also wished to go to school. For me, it was sufficient reason to provide the village with a school of their own. This was the beginning of the first ever school in Akrampa. So, we built a shed, from sticks and branches of the palm trees and Mercy Abbeyquaye was the first teacher. In Ghana, female teachers are respectfully addressed as "Madam." This is how Mercy has become known to all in the village. Nobody called her by her name, only addressed as "Madam." She was asked to do this because she was a retired teacher and lived in the vicinity.

*This "infant" school under the "palm branches shed," became what Pastor Jimmy would thereafter refer to as the **hut he had dedicated**, and it was indeed, a hut!!! The shed school "population" began to increase, and we had to do two sessions in that structure for two distinctive classes – Kindergarten and primary (1 & 2) raising the necessity of adding on the classroom, and changing the structure from palm branches to a real cement building. This we did, by ourselves: the men and fathers making the bricks with the women bringing the water and sometimes to replenish the sand for the bricks with loads of it carried in big pans on their heads. The first three-room block for the first three classes of the primary was built over three years (1999 to 2001)– a room per year. Then we had to add three more classrooms to have a complete 6-room block for the primary school because we didn't want the tiny children to walk the over four kilometers to school in the town, risking their lives on the highway. In 2005, Pastor Woody came to Ghana and dedicated the first portion of the School with the Bishop of the Anglican Church and local authorities. By the close of 2007, we had a building of six classrooms that made the primary school.*

In 2005, when Pastor Woody went back to Ohio, a grant was sent to build the second block of three classrooms to make the **whole primary school** ready for final dedication, in 2008. The generous contributions have continued through today, God be praised. On the wall of the second block of classrooms is inscribed: **DONATED BY THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH, LORAIN OHIO, USA.**

It was the **wish of many parents**, that their children could be educated because they had seen the difference in the quality of life of the very few children, whose relatives, living outside the community, elsewhere in Ghana had afforded them by taking them to school outside Akrampa. The men and women in the village helped in the **how**, by providing free labor. It was impressed upon them that they needed to contribute to this effort, for their children, since their wish for the school was happening.

Our goal for the mission was that the school became part of the endeavor, part of the process of bringing the **Gospel** to the people of Akrampa to bring wholistic healing to their life. We have allowed the Akrampa School to be considered a public (not private) school. In that understanding, when the school was to be registered as an entity, and the Episcopal Church (Anglican Church, as it is called in Ghana), approached to be allowed to identify itself with the school,

we permitted it. That understanding was what led to the collaboration that led to the dedication of the school by the Bishop of the Anglican Church, with Pastor Woody assisting. The school started with a *hut!* But now it has two blocks with each containing three classrooms. And we now have a new building known as *The Kitchen*. These three building were fully funded with support from FLC, and *The Kitchen* was built with additional support from other *church partners and specific individuals*. (A Junior High Building has been built by the Ghanaian government.)

From the humble beginnings of our Akrampa School, we now have hundreds of students enrolled and learning each year. They are taught traditional academic subjects and also about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are fed breakfast, and are now able to Graduate from the 9th Grade in their own town. There are nineteen teachers on staff who make this possible, including the headteacher who doesn't teach.

I want to thank all of our partners for making this story a reality. We continue to pray with you. Covid-19 has touched us all, universally, making things so difficult economically, but God continues to provide for His people. We pray on regular basis that HE will continue to be with us all, and bless us all.

Pastor Ben Wilson