

Dear Friends,

My wife, Julie, and I are so happy to have returned to Ohio this summer to visit with all of our old friends. Our 2024 trip to Ohio is again for a medical issue of mine. It was my failing hip that brought me to you for the first time, way back in 1993. This year it has been *severe pain in my lower back* that prompted our trip to Ohio.

Since 1993, every time either I alone, or with Julie, have visited Ohio; Pastor Jimmy has taken us into his home and made us feel so welcome. I truly consider Pastor Jimmy's house to be "my Ohio home". I will never be able to thank him enough for his hospitality. Pastor Jimmy is a wonderful friend and we think of him as family.

Julie and I have 4 grown children, and our youngest son is Benjamin, age 31. For this trip to Ohio (and the last), we owe great thanks to Benjamin and his friends because they saved, donated, and raised all of the money to pay for our round-trip airfare. We'd also like to thank the *First Lutheran Church Council* for providing us with a monthly stipend during the few months we are here, to help with some basic expenses during our stay. My normal monthly salary is being sent home to Ghana, to pay for our standard monthly bills that continue at home, even while we are here in Ohio (rent, car insurance, utilities, etc.). Our son Benjamin is taking care of our finances in Ghana, while we are in Ohio.

As some of you may know, I had surgery on my *lower back* on 8/29/24. The surgery was successful and I am healing well. Thank you to my surgeon and his staff. The surgical procedure that I had done is called a: Laminectomy.

'A laminectomy is surgery on your spine to remove the lamina. The lamina, or bony arch, protects and supports the back part of your spinal cord on your vertebrae. Removing the lamina relieves pressure on your nerves and spinal cord by making more room in your spinal canal (the tunnel that holds your spinal cord). A surgeon usually preforms a laminectomy in the lower spine to address conditions that cause nerve pain.'

The (laminectomy) surgery on my *lower back* was done at **Mercy Health - Lorain Hospital**, on Kolbe Rd., Lorain Ohio. Both of the previous surgeries on my *hip* were also done there. Mercy Health, as a non-profit hospital has many core values that are in line with helping others, and those in need.

Mercy Health's website has this posted as their Mission Statement:

"Our Mission: *We extend the compassionate ministry of Jesus by improving the health and well-being of our communities and bring good help to those in need, especially people who are poor, dying and underserved.* Our Vision: *Inspired by God's hope for the world, we will be a ministry where associates want to work, clinicians want to practice, people seek wellness and communities thrive.* Our Values: *Human Dignity, Integrity, Compassion, Stewardship, and Service."*

It is by the Grace of God that the administrators, surgeons, doctors, nurses and medical staff here at **Mercy Health - Lorain** were both able and willing to help me multiple times. I would like to say, "Thank You Mercy Health!"

There is a program at Mercy Health called the: *Mercy Health Public Benefits Program*. This program made it possible for the hospital to live out its mission statement and give care, surgery and treatment to me, without any financial charge to myself or First Lutheran. Pastor Jimmy and First Lutheran staff worked with the staff at Mercy Health to fill out all of the appropriate paperwork for this to become reality. Again, Thank you Mercy Health - Lorain! This would have never been possible without you!

Just as I am so grateful to all of the people here in Ohio, and my family at home who have contributed to making this medical trip possible for me, I am also so grateful for the friends that I have at First Lutheran and also at Bethesda on the Bay Lutheran. I'm happy that this trip will restore my health so that I can return to Ghana and my work with the Akrampa Mission.

Please know that as you all faithfully continue to donate to the *Ghana Mission General Fund*, or the *Ghana Breakfast Meal Fund*, or to our *new fundraiser* for the *Ghana School Roof Project* - that 100% of your donations still go directly to Ghana to fund the mission. Thank you for your ongoing and generous support!

Blessings, Pastor Ben Wilson