

Dear Friends,

As you read this, it will be the end of March / early April 2026 and officially the beginning of the Spring season. We hope that the good news contained in this article will bring the same warmth to your heart that Spring brings to Ohio; because this article is filled with visions of cookies, the hopes of children, and our appreciation for the generosity each of you have shown.

**Planning began in November of 2025:** Hosted by Pastor Jimmy, in the warmth of his home, the Ghana Committee met in Nov. of 2025 and unanimously decided that we would officially launch the new large-scale fundraising effort for the Junior High School Renovation Project, by doing something fun and different – the first ever *Ghana Mission Cookie Bake Sale!*

Pastor Ben & the Ghana Committee had spent many months, prior, discussing how the *Junior High School Building* at our Akrampa Mission School still desperately needed to be renovated. The Junior High School Building holds the classrooms for our 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade students, and it was the only school building that had not been included in the *Ghana School Roof Project of 2025*. Why? The Junior High is the only building at our Akrampa School that was built by the Government of Ghana, and we found out too late that the Government had zero intention of coming back to make any repairs or renovations. Sadly, because of that, the Junior High was left out of our previous project. Our Ghana Team/Committee knew that we still needed to help our Akrampa 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Graders and we continually kept it in our prayers and conversations.

The idea of planning & fundraising for two large projects right in a row is something that the Ghana Committee has never done before. We know that our faithful supporters give generously throughout the entire year to our Ghana Main Fund and also our Ghana Breakfast Fund, both of which are funded 100% by donations, allowing us to send our monthly transfers to Ghana to run the day-to-day operations of the Mission and also feed our students three meals a week.

From the summer of 2024 to early 2025 our faithful supporters had also given a tremendous amount of money for the *Ghana School Roof Project of 2025*. We questioned: how could we then go back to our 3 supporting congregations and ask to begin fundraising for the Junior High School Project? The Bible gave us clear answers. The students at our school need our help. *Hebrews 13:16, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Matthew 28:19-20, 1 Peter 4:10, Acts 4:32-35*

The Akrampa Junior High School needs a lot of repairs. All of the doors and windows are either severely damaged, broken or missing entirely. None of the (current) doors or windows fully close or lock. This leaves our students and the building open to the elements, especially wind and heavy rain. It also leaves the building open to wild animals at night. There are many parts of the masonry block that make up the walls that are damaged, along with the eaves of the roof that are beginning to rot. Pastor Ben & the Ghana Committee are still consulting with contractors to determine if this building might also need a full new roof. The JHS building was built in 2015, by Government contractors who used the lowest quality materials possible, and now many repairs are required. The building is becoming increasing unsafe for our 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade students.

Due to the needs of our students, we are praying, hoping and trusting that our faith community of Ghana supporters will rally around this *new project*, to help our oldest students have a safe building, while still maintaining giving to our regular *Ghana Main Fund & Ghana Breakfast Fund*. WE are so very grateful to each of you who helped us to kick off this new JHS Fundraiser by purchasing cookies and donating. Please keep reading to learn the details of our first ever Ghana Mission Bake Sale and the incredible ways that each of you are making a difference.

**The Cookie Bake Sale was a huge success! Thank you:**

Pre-Sale Cookie Orders were taken throughout the month of February 2026. And our Ghana Team/Committee baked cookies for you on the evening of March 13<sup>th</sup> & then all day & into the evening on March 14<sup>th</sup> – with delivery of all cookies to the 3 churches on Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Thank you so much to First Lutheran, Trinity and Bethesda!** Between the three congregations, we sold **244 Packs of cookies** during our pre-sale dates. That equates to **1,464 individual cookies** for us to bake. **Your generosity changes everything!**

For our baking weekend, we transformed both the Kitchen & the Fellowship Hall at First Lutheran into a colorful and vibrant baking machine. The Commercial Kitchen at First Lutheran was turned into an amazing assembly line, with all of our Ghana Team, and some of our family members working together to bake. Primary planning, promotion, and organization of the entire Cookie Bake Sale was done by Kristen Anthony and Randy Miller, with assistance from our Ghana Team, and with the Office Administrators and the Pastors at all three churches.

Randy Miller, the chef on our Ghana Team, led the kitchen beginning with his own personal cookie recipes. On our baking weekend Randy spent every minute of those days combining ingredients from memory, (no written recipe) mixing cookie dough in 2 large stand mixers, and then passing large bowls of dough to the ‘scoopers’. This important job, led by Tanya Mosijcwsky, was to make sure that the dough was scooped out of the bowls and onto the baking trays in the perfect size and shape each time to create symmetry with every single cookie. Shirley Klimczak, Kassity Moore, and Brandi Freeman worked happily with Tanya to ‘scoop’ every cookie *perfectly for you* and seemed to be having a lot of fun together as they worked.

The next job down the line was ‘smash’. And this job was superbly and hilariously executed by Pastor Jimmy, who later in the day received an assist with this task from Brandi Freeman. Once the perfectly round cookie dough balls had been scooped onto the trays, the trays were sent down the line to Pastor Jimmy whose job was to gently press, to slightly flatten – or as we joked all weekend, ‘smash’ – the cookie dough into the flat cookie shape that would go into the oven.

Kristen’s husband, Logan, and her Dad, Jeff, were in charge of the ovens for the entire baking weekend. Logan and Jeff made sure that every tray of cookie dough was in and out of the oven with the correct timing. Then the hot trays were set up on the kitchen counter for a specific time to slightly cool and let the warm cookies ‘set’. When that time was finished, Logan and Jeff walked the trays out to the Fellowship Hall, where the cookies were transferred, still on their parchment paper to the cooling tables. In many senses, Logan took the role of ‘expeditor’, coordinating with Chef Randy, our whole team in the kitchen and also with Kristen and Michelle Milchen who were in the Fellowship Hall, packaging all of the cookies.

In the Fellowship Hall, we had long rectangular tables with pale blue tablecloths for the cooling of cookies when they had come out of the oven. Each of the three churches had a 'zone' of tables for all of their cookies to be organized & counted. Yellow tablecloths for Bethesda's Zone, green tablecloths for First Lutheran's Zone, and orange tablecloths for Trinity's Zone.

When the fully baked cookies were brought to the cooling tables in the Fellowship Hall, they were turned over to Michelle Milchen and Kristen Anthony. Each and every cookie was then lovingly packaged into their clear cellophane wrappers and tied with gold twist ties by Kristen and Michelle. The completed packs of cookies then were moved to the correct 'church zone' of tables to be counted and processed for Sunday's delivery date. The efficiency and teamwork of our **entire Ghana Team**, for the whole weekend, rivaled some professional kitchens!

In the Fellowship Hall, we had dark blue tablecloths for the Ghana Team Break Zone, so that we could take breaks, away from the baking. On Saturday we ordered pizza and all sat together as a team, to talk & rest at lunchtime. It was a lot of fun spending the weekend together, working hard, to create all of those beautiful cookies for our three Ghana Partner Churches.

### **Cookie Pre-Sales & Donations:**

Amongst all three congregations, the Shamrock Sugar Cookies were the biggest hit, with 97 packs sold, total. Then it was the Chocolate Chip Cookies with 77 packs sold, total. Followed by the Snickerdoodles with 70 packs sold, total. (Each pack contained 6 cookies).

Many people from First Lutheran, Bethesda and Trinity bought our delicious cookies. Many people donated money toward our Junior High School Renovation *without* a cookie purchase, and *some people did both – purchased cookies & donated*. WE thank each & every one of you!

In total, from the combination of cookie sales & donations we brought in \$4,933 from this Cookie Bake Sale. This figure is counted from when cookie pre-sales launched at the beginning of February until March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Our expenses for food ingredients and other necessary items for the Cookie Bake Sale came to a total of \$869.96. This makes our cost-to-profit ratio on the Cookie Bake Sale: \$4,063.04

\*In another immense blessing, we had a benefactor come forward and pay for all of our expenses! Due to this donation, the actual cost of all ingredients and items were paid in full. That gives us the ability to have the **total Bake Sale profit of \$4,933** go toward our fundraising for the Junior High School. As always, every dollar will go toward our students. Praise Jesus!

At the end of last year's huge project, we had some money left over in our *Ghana Project Fund*. With the money left from that project, and the total profits of the current Bake Sale, we are now at around 35% of our goal for the Ghana Junior High School Renovation Project Fundraising. Our hope/goal is to fundraise during 2026 and begin the renovations in 2027. Thank you.

If you are a part of First Lutheran, and you would like to contribute, additionally, to the Junior High School (JHS) Renovation Project, please mark your envelopes, and the memo line of your check to read: Ghana JHS Repair Project. If you are a part of Trinity or Bethesda, and would like to contribute, please speak with your Pastor or church leader(s) for the best way to do so.

### **A Special Note:**

Our Ghana Team really enjoyed baking for all of you. We received some feedback and questions on delivery day about the potential for purchase of extra cookies on that day. Please understand that this was our very first time doing a Cookie Bake Sale like this, and we were primarily focused on executing the baking of all pre-sale orders. We feel badly that there were some people who may have wanted cookies and missed that opportunity. Please know that we heard you, and we appreciate the feedback.

IF the Ghana Team would ever do another Cookie Bake Sale (we have not discussed it yet), we would again do Pre-Sales, but we would also try to have a limited number of extra cookies to purchase on delivery day. Thank you for your support, kindness, and understanding.

### **Ghana Mission Gives Back in Support of Grace Community Kitchen:**

One of our partner churches, Trinity Lutheran in Vermilion, are host to a wonderful mission called: Grace Community Kitchen.

Below is a little bit of information about Grace Community Kitchen:

Additional details can be found at this exact website:

[www.trinityvermilion.org/gracecommunitykitchensupport](http://www.trinityvermilion.org/gracecommunitykitchensupport)

*Trinity Lutheran is proud to house Grace Community Kitchen, which is a community wide endeavor to provide food and companionship for those in need in the area. Many local churches and organizations provide assistance in this collaborative outreach, housed at Trinity Lutheran Church, Vermilion, Ohio. Trinity Lutheran also cooks and serves once a month at Grace Community Kitchen. Contact Trinity to cook and serve on their "night". The charity is locally, state and federally recognized and approved. Grace Community Kitchen has a board of community volunteers with hearts for the hungry, lonely and poor living in our extended community. Grace Community Kitchen offers a free service and is open to all who walk through our doors.*

*Meals are carryout only via a drive-up care line at Trinity Lutheran Church, 3747 Liberty Avenue, Vermilion.*

*Where: Trinity Lutheran Church*

*When: Tuesdays & Thursdays*

*Time: 5:00-6:00pm (or until meals are gone)*

~ When our Ghana Team was done with our weekend of cookie baking, we had some additional ingredients leftover: brown sugar, flour, white sugar, salt, butter, green sanding sugar, three big bags of chocolate chips, and some vanilla extract.

Our Ghana Team felt that it was important that our unused food ingredients would go to benefit those in need and to help other people. WE care about our community and because you give so generously to the Ghana Mission to help feed our Akrapma students, when we had the chance, we wanted to give back to our Lorain County, Ohio community.

We took our additional ingredients to Trinity and donated them to Grace Kitchen. They were accepted with joy, by a lovely lady named Twila Schmidt, who is a volunteer at Grace Kitchen. Our ingredients will now be made into cakes, cookies, & meals for our local community. May the Lord bless the hands that cook and bake at Grace Community Kitchen.

Please continue to scroll down, as we are excited to share **13 New PHOTOS** of our Ghana Cookie Bake Sale with you.

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**Cookie Bake Sale Weekend - Photos:**



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**Photo 1** – The Fellowship Hall at First Lutheran is transformed into colorful ‘Zones’ at the beginning of the Ghana Bake Sale Weekend, awaiting the baking & fulfillment of 1,464 pre-sale cookies.



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**Photo 2** – Our thanks to Sandy Dovala, Office Admin., at Trinity Lutheran for creating this graphic that we used for all of our promotional materials for the Cookie Bake Sale.



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**Photo 3** – Ghana Team Chef, Randy Miller, laughs as he tries to continue mixing cookie ingredients while fellow teammate Tanya Mosijcwsky pretends to wipe his brow, in a silly moment captured on camera.

**Photo 4** – Pastor Jimmy is working diligently in his role of ‘smash’ – or gently flattening the cookie dough before it goes into the oven. Pictured here with the Shamrock Sugar cookie dough pre-oven baking.



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**Photo 5** – Logan (left) and Jeff (right), stand ready and smile for the camera as they carefully watch their timers to make sure that each tray of cookies was baked to perfection for you.



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**Photo 6** – (left) shows a multitude of batches of the Shamrock Sugar cookies on the cooling tables in the Fellowship Hall.

**Photo 7** – (below) every pack of cookies was tied with love and a gold twist tie.



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**Photo 8** – Shows all three of our completed packs of cookies – straight on view. Snickerdoodles, Shamrock Sugar cookie, and Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chip.

**Photo 9** – Looking down on all three packs of cookies, from above, you can see their size and how beautiful they really are – and delicious too! Snickerdoodle, Shamrock Sugar Cookie & Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chip.

**Cookie Zones – for all three churches:**



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**Photo 10** – Bethesda on the Bay's Cookie Zone for baking weekend. Holding all of the finished & packaged cookies that were ordered by Bethesda's congregation.

**Photo 11** – Trinity Lutheran's Cookie Zone for baking weekend. Holding all of the finished & packaged cookies that were ordered by Trinity's congregation.



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**Photo 12** – First Lutheran's Cookie Zone for baking weekend. Holding all of the finished & packaged cookies that were ordered by First Lutheran's congregation. This included the two white boxes which contained, in total, 20 packs of cookies that were purchased to be donated to the Tuesday, Front Door (Food Pantry) Ministry that First Lutheran hosts.

**Photo 13** – These are the additional ingredients that were unused at the end of our cookie baking weekend. We donated these ingredients to Grace Community Kitchen, at Trinity Lutheran.



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**On behalf of our Akrampa 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade students, Pastor Ben, & our entire Ghana Team:**

We send our most sincere thanks to everyone who helped to make the first ever Ghana Cookie Bake Sale a huge success. All Praise to Jesus for keeping the electricity on for us on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, when all of the streets around First Lutheran had lost power due to the windstorm.

**Sincerely, Kristen Anthony – Ghana Committee Chair**