

Dear Friends,

This October article is a bit different, as we have a special guest writer.

*The article below is **written by Pastor Jimmy Madsen**, who most of you know personally but may not know that he was one of the founding Pastors of the Ghana Mission. Included here, Pastor Jimmy shares with us some of his thoughts and feelings about Pastor Ben and about the Ghana Mission itself. We hope that you enjoy reading it. If you would like to learn more about the Ghana Mission, including hundreds of photos, the mission's origin story and also all of the current events; all of the Ghana articles can be found online. Both of our partner churches have done a beautiful job of featuring every single one of the articles on their websites. Please check out **either of these exact websites**, listed below, to stay up to date with all the news about Ghana. Thank you.*

www.bethesdaonthebay.org/ghana

- Or -

www.trinityvermilion.org/ghanamission

And now – please read on to hear from Pastor Jimmy.

I visited the village of Akrampa, Ghana in 1996. It was just a couple of years after the decision was made to employ Pastor Bennett Wilson to begin missionary work. What I saw was an extremely poor village with a tribal idol guarding the entrance. There was no source of clean drinking water, so people carried water from a stagnant pool. Most of the children did not go to school. Even if they could manage to get to a *neighboring town* for school, they could not afford the mandatory school uniforms. After all these years I still become emotional when I tell the story about the drinking water. People should not have to live that way.

But I could see that small changes were already starting to happen. Pastor Ben had helped them build a community oven where bread could be baked to be sold at market. He also worked with them to create tie-dyed garments. Both things were an attempt to start a village economy to supplement the subsistence gathering in the bush that most people did.

But Pastor Ben knew that what they really needed was a school. He began by teaching some classes under a tree, along with help from Mrs. Mercy Abbeyquaye – who would go on to become Pastor Ben's assistant and trusted helper in the mission. And eventually he asked First Lutheran, Lorain, to help build some classrooms. By God's providence, some Anglican teachers were available in the area and a school was born, the first ever in Akrampa.

I have not been back there (perhaps it is time for a return trip), but the pictures Pastor Ben sends speak for themselves. And Pastor Woody and a few of our members did visit in 2008.

There is now a water line and spigot in the middle of the village. There were a couple of setbacks, repairs, and false starts from the first few attempts to connect the freshwater line into Akrampa. But on August 10th, 2010 - the water line became official and fully functional. This water line has made fresh water accessible to everyone in Akrampa, adults, children and all of the families.

There are now four school buildings with over five hundred children (Kindergarten through 9th Grade) who have not only academic classes but also a Bible class. There are meals served three days a week that have been a big draw to families that live in the area. There is a new Kitchen Building where the breakfast meals can be prepared, and students can be taught homemaking skills in its classroom.

Additional water sources were added to the school, in 2025, by digging both a Borehole Well for fresh water and a cistern to catch rainwater.

A village has been radically transformed because of this mission work, and the Gospel has been shared through word and deed. It is amazing that First Lutheran Church, Lorain, now joined by Bethesda on The Bay Lutheran Church, Bay Village and Trinity Lutheran Church, Vermilion have made this possible. We have learned together that God provides when we follow the call of the Holy Spirit.

We could easily have talked ourselves out of such a large undertaking. Small churches often contribute to mission work, but it is unusual they would take on such a project on their own. The Spirit gave us the wisdom to see that Pastor Ben's trip to the United States to get a new hip was also God's gift to us for expanding our ministry in a way that we could not have imagined.

We have also been able to be a blessing to Pastor Ben and his family while he has been a blessing to us. He had a debilitating hip condition until he received surgery in Lorain. And he also did not have employment when he returned to Ghana in the Spring of 1994. The civil war in Liberia that he and his family escaped was ongoing and that meant that he would never be able to return to his job as a teacher at the Lutheran Teaching Institute.

The very modest salary that we pay Pastor Ben would not go far in this country. But in the economy of Ghana, it has enabled him to raise his family to adulthood and send them to school.

The work is ongoing, and we welcome the support of others who are moved by the Spirit to make a difference in the world, one small village at a time.

Pastor Jimmy Madsen, Retired