

## Ghana Mission Trip in Review

December 29, 2019 – January 14, 2020



On December 29, 2019, eleven missionaries traveled to Ghana on the 8<sup>th</sup> biannual United Methodist international mission trip to Aworowa, Ghana. Departing from Appleton, Wisconsin, the group arrived in Accra, Ghana on December 30 at 10 PM. Participants took 2 (50# bags of items). One bag contained supplies that we would take to schools, an orphanage, a clinic and a hospital. The other bag was about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> filled with our personal gear and 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s other supplies. After a quick overnight stay at the Airport West hotel, the group began its 9-hour trek to Aworowa, our destination. A stop at Cape Coast on the Gulf of Ghana allowed a tour of the Slave Castle. Slaves departed from this port to be sent across the world. It was truly an enlightening tour to discover and bring into focus the horror of selling people into slavery.

Leaving Cape Coast, we traveled north and east to the City of Kumasi staying overnight at the Royal Kingdom Hotel. Accommodations were limited, lights and electricity worked occasionally, toilets worked but buckets in the bathtub provided a chance to take a bath. Showers did not function. Ninety degree outside temperatures warmed the water to lukewarm as no hot water was available. The group knew we were really in Ghana with breakfast the next morning consisting of one fried egg, one slice of bread and a cup of either coffee, tea or Milo. This was to be our normal breakfast for the next 14 days.

New Year's Day found us in Kumasi visiting the cultural center. It is a place where local artists display their items. It offered a time for a bit of shopping and dickering with Ghana money called "Cedi's." We quickly learned if a price was set, offer one third and then bargain upwards towards 50% of the initial offer. Bargains began to fill our carry-on bags.

Leaving the Culture Center, we headed north to the City of Techiman where we moved into the Premier Palace Hotel that served as our base for the remainder of the stay. By now we learned that driving was crazy, potholes in the roads were everywhere and people drove wherever there were no potholes no matter which side of the road. Our skilled bus driver managed to avoid oncoming traffic of overloaded trucks, bush taxis', motorcycles, goats, cows, sheep and people who constantly walked along the roads just off the edge. A blaring bus horn warned people that we were coming through and that they needed to get out of the way. About every 1/3<sup>rd</sup> mile a large speed bump was installed across the road to slow down traffic. It seems that the national pastime of drivers is to see how fast they can go between speed bumps no matter if in the country or in town. Speed limits were only a suggestion. At times, traffic

seemed overwhelming but after a few days became the new normal. We gave our driver an honorary PhD for his skill in pothole dodging.

For the next 10 days, the group settled into a routine of visiting schools to deliver teaching supplies to elementary, junior high and the local high school. An earlier shipment of nearly 2000 textbooks arrived about a week before the mission team and were distributed to the appropriate grade levels. Additionally, nursing books, medical supplies and clothes for orphans were presented to appropriate groups. In each case, staff welcomed our group in formal settings. We met the Presiding Methodist Bishop of Ghana in Accra, the regional bishop at Wenchi, school headmasters, community leaders and the King of (Central) Aworowa in the Bono East Region of Ghana. The courtesy and welcoming experience reflected the gracious spirit of the people of Ghana. We housed at the Premier Palace Hotel in Techiman and traveled to the village of Aworowa each day. Charlie, the resident white turkey, gobbled his announcement of morning each day and joined us at the breakfast table.



One morning the group painted the inside of a new kindergarten/first grade school that was built in 2019 by former missionaries and partners. It was rewarding to see the school begin to be filled with children in classes over the next few days. Schools have no electricity, running water or amenities that we normally experience here in the U.S., but good teaching is evident. All classes in Ghana are taught in English which has become the most used language of the business world in Ghana. Two years ago, public high school education became free to students. Even though it is now free, many students only complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and go to work helping the extended family's function. In the area we worked, most families farmed 3-5-acre plots raising peanuts, vegetables, plantain, cassava, yams, maize/corn, cocoa and cashews. Their diet depends upon what they can raise. Most have a few chickens and goats to provide a bit of meat. The animals roam the town all day long scavenging for food but return each evening to their home pens. They all seem to know where they live, and no one takes another's animals.

Each afternoon, the mission team enjoyed a filling meal of rice and chicken prepared over an open fire. We also enjoyed the local bananas, watermelon and the sweetest pineapples imaginable. We all were in awe how food could be prepared over open fires in large iron pots.

The last week we were in Ghana, the team led 3 days of vacation bible school. VBS was two hours long each day. The first day 320 children showed up and we managed to play some games, sing some songs

and hand out a piece of hard candy for a treat. The second day, 480 kids showed up and it became a real challenge. The mission crew beamed when the day was completed. We made it through. Preparing for the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of VBS saw the group peel 1000 eggs, cut up fresh fish to be boiled in peanut oil and cook rice anticipating 875 kids. Each child received 2 scoops of rice, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a fish, one hardboiled egg and a frozen pineapple stick. Eight hundred and fifty-two children showed up, so we had enough. The mission crew grinned and collapsed when the two hours was over. The children were delightful, inquisitive about us and happy. They followed us everywhere we went.

Visits to the Aworowa Clinic and Wenchi hospital gave the group an opportunity to see how health care is conducted in Ghana. At each place, we delivered medications and medical supplies and were hosted by hospital administrators, nurses and other staff members. Highly skilled nurses and doctors delivered health care utilizing minimal resources and equipment. It was obvious how proud they were of their health care staff. We visited a neonatal intensive care unit, women's clinic, and laboratories. The head of the nursing program conducted a tour for the group. We also learned that families played an important role as they provided their family member with food, bathing and clothes during their hospital stay.

One of the greatest pleasures was attending church services which lasted 3-4 hours. We sang, danced and tried to listen to what was being said when it was in the local language. Seeing the church take 3 separate offerings during the service was enlightening especially when givers dance their way to the front of the church to drop a few Cedi's in the collection boxes. Joyful giving was on full display.

A special outing, on the last Saturday, to a local waterfall and a monkey sanctuary provided a respite from our daily activities. Feeding Mona monkeys was lots of fun. They love bananas and are not bashful about grabbing them.

At the end of the trip we overnighted in Kumasi and then flew home from Accra via Amsterdam, Detroit and then Appleton. Much was accomplished in 17 days. The following is a list of things we were able to accomplish or provide.

- Provided 2000 textbooks
- Purchased a microphone for the Calvary Methodist Church
- Purchased 2 aluminum ladders to be used in painting projects.
- Completed an internship for a young woman who became a certified seamstress and now can open her own business.
- Provided funds to train a local nurse in the Village of Aworowa so that she can begin a one-year training program to become a mid-wife.
- Visited 6 schools and delivered large bags filled with school supplies
- Delivered over 200 dresses and shorts outfits to the Aworowa orphanage plus gave 110 orphans a gift of a small stuffed animal
- Conducted 3 days of Vacation Bible School (First day attendance 320; second day attendance 415; 3<sup>rd</sup> day attendance 852).
- Prepared 900 food packages to be handed out at the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of VBS. (2 scoops of rice, 1 dried fish, 1 hardboiled egg and a frozen pineapple stick.
- Provided cement for stucco covering of a new classroom building; provided paint and helped paint classrooms.

- Provided 2 laptop computers and 4 computer tablets to leaders of the church, local orphanage and schools.
- Provided 30 soccer balls and 80 pairs of soccer shoes for Junior high and Senior high team members.
- Provided additional funds to support adding a new roof to the Methodist church sanctuary.
- Members of the mission team funded an eye examination for a 16-year-old young man who was experiencing blindness. Doctors provided medication and his mother was assisted in applying for health insurance coverage.

A special thank you is offered to Felecia Mensah, her sisters and her family as they hosted us each day at their compound. They cooked our meals in the traditional Ghana style over open fires and delighted us with spicy cuisine that was nutritious, tasty and filling. Many varieties of rice, vegetables and chicken filled us each day. We certainly did not go hungry.

We thank our church members who donated supplies, funds for shipping materials and prayers during our mission trip. We also thank the people who made donations of medical supplies and medication for the hospital and clinic. We had nearly 1000 pounds of medical supplies and they were greatly appreciated.

**The following is a list of project priorities for 2020 and 2021**

## **2020-21 Mission Projects**

### **Priority #1 (Raise \$4000)**

**Providing potable water for the local high school in Aworowa, Ghana.** Prior to 2018 high school was available only to those who could afford to pay tuition. In 2018 the government of Ghana decreed that high school would be free and students flocked to high school campuses. In Aworowa, the school enrollment has increased from 600 students in 2018 to 2150 students in 2020. As a residential school, students live in cramped living quarters. Recently, the government built new residential housing units due to open in February 2020 but has not provided potable water. Students currently trek about ¼ mile to carry water back to their living quarters for drinking and bathing. They must do this twice a day. The current well is low capacity and often does not have enough water each day.

In a meeting with school administrators and student leaders, mission team members learned that the number one need of the high school was a good source of water immediately adjacent to the living quarters of the students. They requested assistance in drilling a deep-water well with a high capacity flow that could serve the student's needs. A project plan was submitted to the mission team that included drilling cost, installation of a submersible pump, a holding tank, piping and water distribution faucets. This project costing \$4000 U.S. would provide clean water to all students at the high school. Donations will be sought to implement this project.

### **Priority #2 (Raise \$800)**

**There is a great need to provide mid-wife services within the Village of Aworowa.** A young woman who is a trained nurse would like to enter a one-year training program that costs approximately \$1200 for tuition. This is beyond her ability to pay for tuition and the mission team is committed to raising the necessary funds for her further education. The local clinic currently does not have a person on staff who

can work in the village to assist expecting mothers prepare for the birth of healthy children, assist in the actual birthing process and do follow-up training for new mothers. Training this person will greatly enhance the likelihood of healthy babies. We currently have commitment of \$400 and will seek the remaining dollars so that the nurse can begin her training in March 2020.

### **Priority #3 (Raise 500)**

**Starting a new seamstress business.** In the past four years, mission team members have supported a young woman as she completed an internship to become a certified seamstress in Ghana. While the team was in Ghana, we experienced watching her receive her certification and graduate. She now has the ability and credentials to open her own sewing business, hire staff and earn a good income for her family. To get her business started, she needs to rent a business facility. An initial grant of \$450 will allow her to begin her business as early as April 2020. As she is one of the very few certified seamstresses in her village in Ghana her success potential is only being held back by lacking start-up funds. Reaching this goal will provide not only personal funds for herself but provide much needed employment for up to 15 other young women in the Village of Aworowa.

### **Priority #4 (Raise \$500)**

**Sustaining orphanage services in Aworowa.** The village of Aworowa currently has 112 young children between the ages of 2-12 being aided as they have no parents, or in some cases, living relatives. Many of these children became orphans as parents and grandparents died of a variety of diseases. These young children need clothing, food, education and guidance as they grow into adults. It is the intent of the mission support team to donate \$500 annually to the orphanage for the above needs.

### **Donating Funds**

**Each of the above priorities are much needed. Donations can be sent to St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 600 Wilshire Blvd. Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481. Donors can specify which priority they wish to fund or send a general designation check. Checks should be labeled "Ghana mission priorities" and be made payable to St. Paul's United Methodist Church.**