

**Ghana Mission of the
Protestant Reformed Churches in America**

JANUARY 2005 NEWSLETTER

Rev. Rodney Miersma, Private Mail Bag #15, Madina-Accra, Ghana, West Africa
Telephone: 011-233-21-518-584 — E-mail: rmiersma@africaonline.com.gh

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15

Dear fellow saints in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Greetings from Ghana to all of our fellow saints in the name of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ. It is in His name that we go out into all the world to preach the gospel of peace.

As I write this letter I stare in amazement at the heading, JANUARY 2005 NEWSLETTER. Another year has gone by and in two weeks on January 14 we will have been here for a whole year. The time has gone by quickly. The passing of another year means that we are that much closer to the day when our Lord will return upon the clouds of heaven. Before He returns all His people must be gathered into His fold. In obedience to our Lord as churches we are busy doing just that in the work of missions. May God continue to grant His grace to all those who preach the gospel, whether that be on the mission field, in established churches, or in the training of seminary students for the ministry.

Little did we realize that when we came a year ago as co-missionary and his wife that in the course of the year that would change to missionary and his wife due to the retirement of Rev. Bekkering due to health reasons. It is a good thing that we do not know what the future holds, but that we can go forward in faith knowing Who holds the future.

Last week we celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas in Ghana is quite different

from what it is in the USA and other parts of the world. There are the stores that put up decorations and play Christmas music, but much more than that one does not see. Many will get together as families, even traveling to the home villages to see family and loved ones. An Advent series had been preached on the prophecies of Jesus' birth and the announcement of the birth of his forerunner, John the Baptist. I was anticipating a church full of people on Christmas morning, but was sorely disappointed. Just a handful showed up which manifested the truth of the sermon that as there was no room for Joseph and Mary (and the Christ in her womb) in the inn so there is by nature no room in the hearts of the people in this world for Jesus Christ. I had to make very plain to the people who were not there when I saw them later that a Christmas without Christ was no Christmas at all.

On a much brighter note Sharon and I want to express our sincere thanks to all of you who have written to us in the past year. This is a source of much encouragement to us. This was certainly evident also by the large amount of Christmas cards, pictures, and emails that we received this past month. Thank you once again for your continued support.

As I write this letter it is New Year's Eve. The coming of the new year is a much bigger celebration than Christmas. As I sit here in the study there are numerous skyrockets flying overhead and exploding. As poor as the people

in this community are we wonder where in the world they get the money for something as useless as fireworks.

This past week we had the opportunity to attend another naming ceremony. The child had been born already in September, but the father was on peacekeeping duty in Ivory Coast, a neighboring country to Ghana. Thus, the naming ceremony was postponed until the father returned home this week. I was able to read and explain Psalm 127 to the parents, as well as to the extended family, military personnel, and friends. John and Judy Bouma were also present. This particular ceremony was held in the home.

The council of our calling church, Hull PRC, has asked me to include now and then some information concerning attendance. At the morning worship service we have an average of 67 people. Many of these are children, some of whom come without their parents. When one asks these children where their parents are you often find out that the father goes to one church, the mother to another, and the grandmother to yet another. They simply have no concept of the covenant and worshiping together as a covenant family. The evening service usually is about half of that, about 35. In our Tuesday evening Bible Study we generally have about 15 to 20 in attendance. Presently we are discussing the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. They must be led very slowly for it takes something for them to understand all the symbolic language. Until they understand this it is difficult for them to understand how these letters apply to them in Ghana. The other Bible Study, which is held on Saturday evening for the young adults, is led by John Bouma. Presently they are studying the parables of Christ. There are about seven attendees. These numbers are less than half of what there was two years ago. Christ had the same experience. As long as He performed miracles and fed them bread and fish He had large crowds follow Him. However, when He told them that He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom with earthly riches they went

away. The people in Ghana are no different. As long as there were plenty of handouts and the hope of monetary gain there were great numbers. Now they are realizing that attending worship services is not about enriching oneself in worldly goods. Thus, many go away seeking the bread that perishes rather than the bread of life. This is right in harmony with what many churches in Ghana preach. It is called Prosperity Preaching. Preachers promise all kinds of prosperity in the way of earthly goods simply by coming to church. If the prosperity does not come, then they will tell you that you have not enough faith. The more one gives, the more one will receive in return. Of course, the only ones enriched are the church leaders. That idea is sometimes conveyed with respect to the offerings that are taken in the fellowship here. There have been those who believed that the minister kept all the collections for himself. Therefore, many misconceptions have to be corrected in order to have them understand the positive truth.

As I look back over this letter there seems to be a number of negative items. I make no apologies. A newsletter must be factual and truthful so that you as God's people know what is taking place on the mission field which you support with your prayers and gifts. We pray that the Lord's will may be done and that we may rest in the direction of His leading. Continue to remember in your prayers us and the Bouma's as well as all the missionaries and their families wherever they are laboring. Not only remember us but the calling churches and the mission committees as well. There is much labor expended by many people in the cause of preaching the gospel to all nations. The work can only be accomplished by a rich measure of God's grace.

In behalf of all of us here,
The Miersma's.