

## FEBRUARY 2005 NEWSLETTER

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

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*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 Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Who gathers, defends, and preserves His church by His Word and Spirit.

Now that we have been here for one year some things are beginning to repeat themselves. A year ago Sharon and I were making numerous trips into Accra to immigration to get a residency permit. Now it is time for renewal. Having done it all before, and knowing now what has to be done, it went much smoother with a lot less hassle. Our passports had also expired earlier, so now we have new passports with new residency stamps in them. In addition to having our passports stamped, we also had to get a green card this time. Their filing system leaves a little to be desired. To find our green card the agent first went through a stack of them on his desk. Not being able to find them, he pointed to a much larger stack beside me and told me to find it myself. So here I peruse through many green cards of people from all over the world until I find the ones belonging to myself and Sharon. For such official documents the security did not seem all that secure.

Also a year ago in our first newsletters we reported that we were having problems with our electric being cut off or only having partial power in the house. We were told that the transformers were too small and that in about a year that would be corrected. A year has gone

by. New poles have been erected. New wires have been attached to these poles. And, yes, new transformers. However, when you look up at the lines you see that they are not yet connected to the power grid. They are making progress, but it takes them a while. As a result our generators are getting a good work-out. John Bouma has been without electricity for almost a week. We have had several times this week when we were without power for a day or more. That means that the generators always have to be in top condition. Today (Saturday) I returned from catechism and tried to start the generator since the power was off, but it would not start. Immediately I loaded it onto the truck and brought it to the repair "shop" since I did not want to go into the week-end without a generator. I put shop in quotation marks since all it is is a few guys under a shade tree beside the road. I thought it perhaps just needed an adjustment here or there. As it turned out the head gasket had to be replaced. So it goes here in Ghana. Just another insight into our life here.

Judy Bouma returned to the USA the latter part of January. John's mother is in the rest home in Rock Valley, IA and had become critically ill. Judy went back to help care for her. Presently John is alone in his house. Remember them in your prayers as they struggle through this period.

As far as the fellowship is concerned, not much has changed since last month. The attendance in all areas remains about the same. Every once in a while I like to include information about

customs here that are completely foreign to us. When a mother gives birth to a son she lives with her parents for three months. It does not matter whether the parents live many miles away up in the hills some place. So for three months the husband/father has little contact with wife and child. When asked why this is the case, they really can not tell you. It is simply the custom. Another custom is that when a person dies and is buried near where he lived the relatives will take some hair and finger/toenail clippings and bring them to his home village, especially when that home village is far away, and bury them there. Sounds as if there is some superstition involved, but again, when asked, they really cannot tell you why they do this. That is just the way it always is done. Then today Sharon remarked about a little boy whose first birthday is tomorrow and asked what kind of celebration they were going to have. The answer was that there would be no celebration because the boy was naughty in that he did not walk yet. Figure that one out. All you can say is, "That's Ghana!"

Sunday is always an enjoyable day for us. Not simply because we go to the Lord's house to fellowship with Him and our fellow saints, but also because Sharon and I generally have from four to ten young people over for noon dinner. They do all the work in the kitchen, preparing the meal which Sharon has partially gotten ready on Saturday, and afterwards do the dishes. The kitchen is a real social center. The young people are chattering away, laughing, teasing, and just having a good time. These few hours on Sunday are like an oasis in the desert for them. They can come here, have a good meal, listen to Psalms and other like music, and read the *Beacon Lights* and *Standard Bearer* as well as other Christian literature. Plus, if they want to take a nap there are several beds on which to lie down. One of the young men said that he never knew what rest on Sunday meant until he started to come to our house. Otherwise Sunday is business as usual. One will go to the market to buy and to sell, or do some work. You can tell them, and preach the

truth, but they do not seem to get it until they actually experience it in your home. The last month we have been trying something different. We have been having native Ghana food which is a treat for Ghanaians. Just like a Dutchman loves his meat and potatoes, so the Ghanaians love what they have grown up on.

Priorities is a subject which needs more understanding. One teaches them that they must work, otherwise they may not eat. One should not come for benevolence if there is another means available to them. Therefore work is of high priority. So they will work wherever they can get a job, which is often far away, thereby making it impossible to come to church regularly. As a result they must be reprimanded for abstaining from the means of grace, that the earthly work must not stand in the way of their spiritual need which is satisfied in the preaching of the Word. It would appear that one cannot win. However, we know that God's Word does not return void, that it will work the will of the Lord as a savor of life unto life as well as a savor of death unto death.

That is just a little bit of life here in Ghana. We do not always understand why things are done the way they are. That is all part of learning the culture, which takes a long time. Remember us in your prayers as we wrestle with these many matters. In the long run all this is richly rewarding, for not everyone gets the privilege of living in and learning the culture of a foreign country. May the Lord's blessings also rest on you as you continue your sojourn here on earth with eyes uplifted looking for the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven.

In the love and service of Christ,  
The Miersma's