

MARCH 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 once again from Ghana in the name of Jesus Christ Who continues to gather by His Word and Spirit His church from the four corners of the earth.

February was a short month which means that the time for the March newsletter has quickly come. When you read this letter most of you will still be experiencing colder temperatures with a promise of spring in the air. We do not experience the four seasons in Ghana. There is a hot, rainy season, and there is a hotter, dry season. Right now we are in the hotter, dry season. By hot I mean about 95 F or 35 C every day. Accompanying this are the winds off of the Sahara Desert bringing a perpetual cloud of dust which makes keeping any thing clean an impossibility. Some of you have said that you can see why we need a generator so that we can keep the air conditioners running. We do not have the luxury of having air conditioning in the house. If we did, it would be prohibitively expensive to run. Our truck does have air which we appreciate very much, especially when we are in heavy traffic and barely move along.

Last month I reported that Judy Bouma had left for Rock Valley, IA to help care for John's mother who was critically ill. She is still in critical condition, but arrangements have been made for hospice care which helps quite a bit. Judy has since returned to Ghana. May we

continue to remember the Boumas in our prayers in this regard.

At present we have started anew in the Heidelberg Catechism preaching. This time around I am preaching from the Catechism in the evening service so that the members who usually come only in the morning will also hear a sermon on a text directly from Scripture. I am now preaching on a Lenten series which will take us to the end of March.

Our Tuesday evening Bible study is on the book of Revelation. We just finished the first three chapters which include the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. They were given the option of continuing or going to another book of the Bible. They chose to continue. In the discussion I have been trying to apply all the relative points in the seven letters to the fellowship here. That seems to strike home as well as any thing.

Funerals continue to have a predominant place in the life of the Ghanaian. If someone is missing on Sunday more than likely that person has gone off traveling to some village. First they have to make all the arrangements which in many cases may take several weeks. It is a matter of prestige if a body can lie in state for some time. It is not at all uncommon for family members to go into debt which may take a life time to pay off. No doubt this is due to the tribal belief that the spirit of the departed one comes back. Therefore there is no expense

spared with respect to the funeral. Funeral attendance is mandatory by the family and the extended family. Missing a funeral is a severe reproach on the family. As far as social events are concerned funerals top the list. Some caskets are patterned after what the person did in his lifetime. A wealthy man may be buried in a casket that resembles the Mercedes-Benz that he drove. A mother with children may have a casket that looks like a chicken with little chicks underneath. Other examples are a tuna fish or fishing boat for the fisherman, a long green onion for the onion farmer, or a lion for the hunter. An interesting fact about these types of caskets is that they are not allowed in a Roman Catholic Church or a Christian church because of their supposed ties to fetish beliefs. When one is converted to Christianity one would expect that these practices would stop. However, traditions die hard and the threat of family discipline is strong. One can certainly see the power of sin and Satan in the world.

Last December we had elections here in Ghana. The present President was re-elected. This past month the new budget was presented in which there was a fifty percent raise in fuel prices. That means that all taxi and tro-tro fares go up correspondingly. Those are the direct effects. The price increase soon affects all other goods as well. The sad thing is that the wages do not increase, so the poor have yet a harder struggle. Those that were just able to keep their head above water are now forced into a yet poorer category who must struggle just to survive. Meanwhile much of the increased revenue for the government is funneled into more bureaucracy making the rich richer and the poor poorer. Certainly this is an indication of the running of the black horse and the imminent return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven.

An interesting development took place recently. A man converted from Islamism was going from door to door in an evangelistic effort to try to get people interested in his church, The Kingdom Business Church

International. He had come to John first who gave him Rev. R. Hanko's latest book, *Doctrine according to Godliness*. He was quite impressed with the doctrines explained. John and I have met with him and his senior pastor to find out just what they believe and what they wanted from us. We have learned in the past that many little church groups will express agreement with us just so that their relationship with us could give their church some legitimacy in the eyes of others. They really do not care what you believe as long as they can get some help in promoting their own agenda. At this point this appears to be the case here also. The pastor said that he has the gift of healing, believes in the altar call, and they have deaconesses. So we have a little more to discuss before we make any commitment to help them or associate with them. We certainly do not want to pass up the opportunity to preach the gospel to them. As far as we can determine for now they really want us to promote their own cause. So we will see what develops from this. This church group is not located in the Accra area, but in Tema which is the next major city a short distance to the east.

We pray that this newsletter finds you strong in the Lord for we live in evil days in which Satan goes about as a roaring lion seeking to devour those that belong unto the Lord. Satan knows that his days are short and puts all his efforts and resources against the remnant that God has saved in Jesus Christ. We can see this very clearly here. May the Lord's blessings rest upon you as you continue to sojourn in the fear of the Lord. Continue to remember the Bouma's and us as we labor in the service of our Lord in a far away land in a strange culture.

In the service of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The Miersma's