

Destination Ghana, Africa 2011

MISSION TRIP TO GHANA, AFRICA IN SUMMER 2011

This Summer I had the opportunity to talk to the 7th to 12th graders in the Super Summer School at the Bangor Middle School about Ghana. The class was very excited to learn about Ghana. They asked very curious and intelligent questions about life in Ghana, how I grew up, what a typical day in Ghana is like in the life of children, what sorts of hardships they face, what they like to do and their education, etc.

I tried to answer some of these questions as best as I could, but “the hardships they face” was the question that kept coming back. I told them that it is very difficult for children in Ghana to buy simple cold medicines and they also have not got daily necessities like toothpaste and brushes to clean their teeth. They use sticks from the bark of trees or soft sponges produced locally. These creative things are able to help them clean their teeth, but because they are not using any fluoride most of the children have decaying teeth.

One girl raised her hand as if to ask me a question, and then asked what we can do about it. How can we help these poor children in Africa, in Ghana? I said if we all can bring a few items like a tooth brush, a tube of tooth paste, a packet of pain medicine, we can send these items to the people who are in need, especially the young children, so that their lives can improve.

The Teachers, Tracy Finkbeiner and Latrice Gonzales, and staff Sherry Clifford, Bridget Pruett and the new Superintendent heard what the children wanted to do and asked me to send them a list of items so they can help collect these items and send them to Ghana. The Superintendent told me we can set something up with a school and hopefully if technology allows the Bangor School Students can connect with students in Ghana via Skype while we are in Ghana.

I called the Methodist Church in Ghana and asked how we can help, and they have given us a pastor who is also a chaplain at the biggest hospital in Ghana. The Rev. Dr. Bart-Plange is the pastor of Gbawe Methodist Church, and the whole town is buzzing with the news that folks from the United States are planning to come to Ghana to help in a small way.

Like the Students in Bangor most of us may only know just a little bit about Ghana so let me use this opportunity to share briefly about Ghana.

Ghana is located on the West Coast of Africa. Ghana was colonized by the British for over a hundred years. It was called Gold Coast because the Portuguese, who were the first to land in Ghana in the 1400s, discovered a ton of gold. The name was changed to “Ghana” when the nation became independent in 1957. Ghana shares borders with La Côte d’Ivoire on the West, Burkina Faso on the North, Togo on the East, and the Atlantic Ocean on the South. Ghana is mainly an Agricultural Country with a tropical rain Forest.

The capital town of Ghana is called Accra and it is the administrative, political and economic center of the country. There are many forts and castles in Accra and Ghana as a whole. The Dutch, the Danes and the British all built fort and castles in the country. The Central region whose capital is called Cape Coast also has a lot of slaves castles built along its coast. Ghana also has a lot of mining industries in the Western part of the country where gold, bauxite, diamonds and other precious metals are extracted. Some of these businesses, like the Ashanti Goldfields, are listed on the New York Stock exchange.

Weather: Ghana is close to the Equator so it has a tropical climate with two seasons—the rainy and the dry seasons. Different regions of the country have their rainy season at different times. The north has its rain from March to November, and dry in the remaining months. The South has two seasons starting from April to July with the monsoon rains fallings from one season to another.

Area Attractions: The Seat of the Government is called Christianborg Castle, which was built by the Danes. You can tell the European presence was huge in Ghana. I have not even spoken about the French who tried to also occupy the Eastern side. There are big markets, malls and people selling items in stores all over the place. One thing in abundance is great hot spices.

There is a place called Independence Square where parades are held during Independence Day celebrations. There are, of course, nice beaches and the forts and castles to visit.

In Kakum, which is like 25 miles from Cape Coast, is the Kakum Natural Park. This is a natural reserve packed with monkeys, elephants, antelopes, and over 300 species of birds and different animals.

People and Culture Religion: Due to the influence of the British, many people in Ghana speak English. The medium of transaction, business and instruction is English. However, there are about 12 local and ethnic languages with about 24 dialects. Some of the popular languages are Ashanti, Fanti (Sarah's language) Ga (Kofi's), Dagbani, Ewe, and Adangbe.

Ghana has 10 ethnic groups with different traditions, culture and customs. The Ashanti's are known for their gold, kente cloth and wooden stools.

Ghanaians, like all African countries, are fond of music and many people dance during ceremonies, marriages, funerals, in church and at church activities. The popular Ghanaian music is called Highlife.

Religion: About 40 percent are Christians and 30 percent Muslims and the remainder follow the African Traditional Religion. This is a belief in the ancestors and the Supreme Being.

Government: Ghana has had its fair of political instability but it is a constitutional democracy, with a president, parliament, and Supreme Court.

Economy: Ghana's economy is based on Agriculture and Ghana used to be the largest exporter of cocoa. One secret I have to tell you, if you like chocolate, Ghana makes the "best" chocolate in the world. Hershey actually uses cocoa from Ghana as part of their ingredients for their chocolate. Ghana's currency is called the Cedi (¢).

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There are about 1.45 cedi to one US dollar. When I was leaving Ghana in 1999 the population was 18 million it is up to 20 million at the moment.

The poverty rate of the people in Ghana is very high. You are either fortunate to be born in a situation that allows you to afford education and the basic necessities, or not. It is called “the haves” and “the have not’s.” Over 32 percent of the people are below the poverty line.

About 60 percent of people over the age of 15 can read or write, and the average annual income for the people is \$350. Most of the people live on a dollar a day and cannot afford three square meals.

This brings me to the need for your help. We hope between The Bangor School District and the surrounding churches we can collect these items so we can send them to the people. We hope to send about four Teams over to Ghana: a Medical Team, Pastoral Team, Youth Team and Lay Team, and about 5 people have already expressed their interest to go on the “Ghana, Africa Mission Trip.” If you are interested in going with us to Ghana on one of the Teams, please contact me through one of the numbers or email listed below. If you would to help collect the items, below is the list for your newsletter. Please help us to help these people. Please note that these items should all be new due to the vulnerability of the children and people.

Apart from these items, if you have anything else that you would like to donate like shoes, clothing, computers, or items that you are not using or feel you do not need, we will gladly collect these items to ship over to the people in Ghana. Thank you so much for supporting this mission. If you want to go on the trip, please contact me so we can provide you with the requirements for the trip next summer. But we will be collecting these items starting the beginning of September 2010 at the Richmond United Methodist Church, on 8538 Delaware Drive, Bangor, PA 18013. Please bring these items to the church office so it can be stored safely. All other items like clothing, schoolbags, shoes etc should be left on the stage at Thomas Hall. As you go shopping please pick these items up wherever you shop and bring them to the Richmond Church.

Thank you so much for making a difference! If you have any questions please contact me at the address below. You may also visit our website for updates on our preparations for this Mission Trip to Ghana.

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ITEMS NEEDED

Vicks Children's NyQuil Cold and Flu
Triaminic Day time Cold and Cough (non drowsy)
Triaminic Night time Cold and Cough Syrup Purple
Dimetapp Children's Cold and Cough Elixir
Dimetapp Children's Night time Flu Syrup
Children's Tylenol Plus Cold
Children's Tylenol Plus Cold and Stuffy nose
Children's Tylenol Multi Symptom Cold
Arthritis Syrup for Children
Children's Advil - Fever Reducer
Vicks Pediatric 44E Cough and Chest Congestion Relief Formula
Vicks Pediatric 44M Cough and Cold Relief
Dimetapp Children's Plus Cough Infant Drops(non-drowsy)
Little Colds Decongestant Plus Cough (non-drowsy)
Robitussin CF Alcohol-Free Cough Syrup Non-Drowsy
Robitussin DM
Triaminic Soft Chews Cough and Runny Nose
Triaminic Chest Yellow
Sudafed Children's Nasal Decongestant Chewable
Children's Tylenol Plus Cough and Runny Nose
Children's Tylenol Cough and Sore Throat
Band aids, Cotton balls, rubber gloves, Q-tips
Neosporin
Original Neosporin
Neosporin Pain Relief
Triple antibiotic ointment
St. Joseph's Aspirin for Children
Bayer Chewable Children's Aspirin
Children's Tylenol
Johnson's baby powder
Johnson's Medicated Baby Powder with Aloe
Tooth brushes
Toothpaste
Crest oral B toothbrushes
Colgate toothpaste
Aqua fresh toothpaste
Crest toothpaste
Ivory soap bars

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Dove soap bars
Dial soap bars
Olay soap bars
Johnson Head-to-toe baby wash
Shampoo
L'Oreal Shampoos
Sauve Shampoos
Johnson Baby Shampoo
Combs
Small personal hand mirror
Flip Flops, all sizes for boys and girls
Purell Hand sanitizer
Pens and pencils
Crayons, colored pencils, markers
Notebooks
Coloring books
and Bibles!