



LUTHERAN  
CHURCH OF **HOPE**

By Pastor Merv Thompson

# Pastor's Update

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925 Jordan Creek Pkwy ■ West Des Moines, IA ■ Aug. 26, 2005

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*"Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." I Tim 1:2.*

Jesus issues the missional challenge in Acts 1:8, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."* I always preferred the translation of this verse from the King James, where it reads, *"you will be my witnesses...unto the uttermost parts of the earth."* Uttermost always has seemed to be more dramatic, more compelling than just the ends of the earth.

Or we cannot forget the Apostle Paul giving this particular emphasis in Acts 16 when he has a powerful vision, seeing a man from Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Without a vision people perish, the Bible tells us, but with a vision there is power and impetus. Paul immediately set out to go to Macedonia, convinced that God has called him to preaching the good news to them.

The "uttermost parts" of the earth still await the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our vision still includes people who are calling to us, "Come over and help us." With the overwhelming majority of people in the world today living below the poverty line, the voices in this vision form a crescendo.

Responding to this call Pastor Pat Quaid from our staff led eight people on a "scouting trip" to Ghana in Africa this past month, traveling the 17 hour, 7000 mile journey to respond in like manner to the Apostle Paul. The group included Steve & Cindy Florer, Kaaren Olesen, Jeff Nieting, Christa Hansen Owens, Gwen Owens and Pastor Pat Quaid. The following will be a much truncated version of what the group encountered on the other side of the globe.

Mission trips by their very nature are transformation. While the stated purpose is to bring some kind of hope, some kind of love of Jesus, some kind of positive change to the place of the journey, at the heart of every such trip is the transformation of the people who experience the journey. Almost nothing has quite the power to transform us as a trip into a place of abject poverty, especially when in the midst of this deprivation is so clear a presence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Such is the situation in Ghana.

According to Pastor Quaid, some of more obvious learnings which took place on the trip included:

*The purpose of the church today, of Lutheran Church of Hope, is not just to meet the needs of our members, to take care of people. Much more important is the challenge of equipping people to serve others, especially people in need. The church is not just a gathered community, it is also a scattered community, bringing hope and healing to the world, the "uttermost parts" of the earth.*

*The African church is growing much faster than anywhere in Europe or America. Perhaps in the near future everything will be reversed, and Africans will begin sending missionaries to declining churches on our turf, demonstrating how the Holy Spirit can bring transformation to us.*

*We have a world of abundance, there is plenty for everyone. What we have is a distribution problem, a handful of people have far too much and the rest of the world has far too little. Anyone in the world who has a house and a car is among the richest 5% in the world, and so Jesus challenges us to bring justice and hope to the 95%.*

*Lutheran Church of Hope has a God-given call specifically to Ghana, which has so gaping needs and has been largely underserved by traditional missionary efforts (consider the difference with Tanzania, which has massive infusions of people and resources.)*

The key to our relationship with Ghana comes through a dynamic leader named Pastor Sam Dunya. Many will remember his visit earlier this summer. Pastor Sam combines a deep faith in Jesus with abundant entrepreneurial skills (essential in that setting.) He is constantly creating new ways to help people and also to generate income to fund the growing ministry.

Pastor Sam's organization, Globeserve, in the past 9 years has planted 41 congregations, now with 3600 members. He has trained 16 full-time pastors and 5 administrative assistants. Of course all of this is only a drop in the bucket, there are at least 14,000 villages in Ghana, most of which have no churches at all. The present plan of Globeserve is to plant four more churches in 2005 and then eight each year thereafter.

Our team discovered that church leaders in Ghana are implementing three specific initiatives to serve the population while also raising much needed seed money. The ultimate

goal is that this organization and each congregation will become self-sufficient, and in order to do so creative ways of raising funds is essential.

1. The first project has to do with water, appropriately enough for Christians, giving life-giving water. Pastor Pat said that villages tend to fall into two categories, those with active wells and those without. A village with a well has far better health and well being than one without a well.

Pastor Sam has now devised a brilliant plan that is to dig a well in front of each congregation which is planted, on the church property. When anyone wants to find fresh water, all they need to do is to come to the church. What a marvelous symbol. I talked in a recent Update about the power of water. The church in Ghana can now have a biblical theme, "Come to the Water. Come to the water and drink deeply. Here are the waters of Baptism, here is the living water, here is fresh water.

What is disturbing is that providing a well for a village is not all that expensive. With a \$250 drilling kit and a team of people with the right machinery and expertise, a 160 foot well can be dug quite easily. This is a high priority for us and for the church of Ghana.

In addition, the ministry is raising funds to purchase better purifying equipment. Church people are filling bags with purified water and then selling them very inexpensively. At the present time they are earning about \$17 a day, but the upside is huge.

2. A second initiative is to effectively farm the land. Pastor Sam and Globeserve have over forty acres of land and they want to make this a test field, co-operating with the Agriculture Department of Ghana. The Hope team learned about this effort first hand by helping to plant corn by hand on a 1.7 acre plot of land. A new diesel tractor and planter, with an added device to cut and clear trees will be of great help. By selling bags of corn and various nuts and fresh fruits, the ministry can raise additional funds.

3. A third initiative is the Internet Café. Lutheran Church of Hope, among others, has given a large collection of computers that now are available to the general population. By charging a small amount to use the internet, money can be earned for the ministry. Globeserve is now in the process of setting up a high speed internet service which should become increasingly popular.

A huge concern of Ghana as well as much of Africa is that of health care. Although the percentage of people

who have AIDS is much lower in Ghana, the threat is growing and many children have been orphaned. Just as important in Ghana is the need for a vaccination for malaria. The team was shocked to find in one town a new hospital with state of the art equipment standing empty, because there are no medical personnel to staff it. Medical people from Hope helped bring some health care during the visit.

Pastor Pat and the team wish to share some of the goals of the Ghana Mission:

*We presently give \$23,000 to Ghana from our benevolence budget. By interpreting the needs and creating new partnerships, we hope to increase that funding substantially.*

*We wish to encourage many more people to consider participating in a mission trip. The next one to Ghana will be next spring, but of course there are other mission trips as well, 8 or 9 in 2006.*

*We would like in the future to bring many of the pastors and lay leadership from Ghana to the Hope Leadership Center, which is presently being created. Providing scholarship money for this effort would be essential.*

*We hope to participate in the funding of many specific items; a 23 passenger vehicle, a tractor, a bigger water purifying system, and many other projects. Contact Pastor Pat or anyone who was on the mission trip for more information.*

At the close of the journey, the entire group went to visit a castle which had been used for the slave trade, beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Ghana was the center for the largest movement of slaves in all of Africa. As the group walked through the castle, they were horrified to see the dungeons, the utter darkness, the lack of fresh air, the unspeakable conditions present. A poignant reminder of the tragedy was that there was only one door out of the castle, and that was to the sea and the ships which brought the slaves to America. So many problems in Africa stem from these times, and we have more than a little responsibility to try to replace injustice and oppression with justice.

Please pray for the Ghana mission, for the mission teams which go out from Hope and for the challenge to be laid upon each heart in the congregation. Remember we are to be witnesses to the "uttermost parts" of the earth and people are still saying as Paul envisioned, "Come over and help us." And in bringing hope and healing to others, we ourselves are transformed.