

Sunday, 2011

Greetings to you dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2011: We woke up with the sun, which is about 6:00 a.m. I called Ron's room to see if he was ready and willing to join me on my daily walk. He had just started to wake up and agreed to go. Being a Sunday, the traffic was much lighter this morning. We were passed by a group of about 25 youth wearing green and yellow colors running to the accompaniment of a trumpet and drum. One of the women was carrying a large yellow flag with the name of a church in black letters. (How many of you were out that early encouraging people to attend St. Paul's? Ha! Ha!) The big hill that we ascended shortly after starting our walk took the wind out of them and they stopped running just before they reached the summit. Then they dispersed down a side street.

Moments later, we heard the chants of a battalion of cadets from one of the many security companies/paramilitary guards in Accra. They seemed to be in better shape than the church people as they kept a good pace in spite of the steep hill. Ron noticed that unlike the church group, they were running on the correct side of the street: facing the traffic as they ran.

At breakfast Ron appeared to be whiter than normal. Last night's coleslaw seemed to have not agreed with him. He went back to his room. A few minutes later I began a conversation with a gentleman from England. He was a "frustrated" secondary school teacher on "holiday" (European for vacation.) Apparently, according to Neal, students in the British public schools show little respect to their teachers and classmates; parents are not supportive; administrators appear to be hand-tied by the legal system to discipline disruptive students. This gave me a chance to "boast" about the joys and blessings of our Christian Day School.

The 10:00 a.m. service at St. Paul's in the Kanda District of Accra officially began at 10:15! The worship service lasted a little over two hours and neither Ron nor I heard anyone voice an objection, nor did we see anyone tap his watch to see if it was working! Ron was introduced as my body guard! He observed that the people worshipped with great passion and that there was a good mix of people of all ages, with a large presence of young adults. They used the old "The Lutheran Hymnal" of 1941 and loosely followed the communion service on page 15! (Anyone remember that beautiful order of worship?) Whether it was a hymn from the hymnal or a contemporary Ghanaian song, the people were accompanied by the organ, a guitarist, a drummer, and a trumpet player. The sound blended together beautifully.

Of course, the highlight of the service was the sermon based on 1 Peter 2:9-10. During the introduction I reminded them that in each of the last two World Cup Soccer Tournaments, Ghana defeated the United States in the quarterfinals--the congregation erupted in cheers and applause. At the close of the sermon, again the congregation applauded. This left me with an awkward sense of humility because I am only doing the task our LORD has called me to do when I preach, and it is to His glory that I preach. I also had the privilege to assist with the distribution of the Sacrament for our LORD'S Supper.

After the service, Ron was impressed at their custom of everyone lining up to shake hands with everyone else who worshipped that day. It helps them to grow in their Christian fellowship. He also noticed that they took two offerings: one was collected by the ushers, as in the States; the other offering members brought forward while dancing, clapping, and singing. (Note to our treasurer: TWO OFFERINGS!) I was amazed at how many of the church members remembered me from the past times that I was privileged to preach at St. Paul's in Ghana. A group of young Finnish female teachers worshipped with us. They were on "holiday" for 90 days and were volunteering in Ghana as a mission project. Having fair skin and white blonde hair, they were easy to spot in the congregation. They were staying with a member who is Finish and married to a Ghanaian businessman. Somehow I got the impression that she was the mother of one of the Finish young women.

When Ron and I left to have lunch with Dr. Fynn and his wife, some people were preparing for a funeral celebration outside the church. Large white tents and white plastic chairs had been set up and a group of men were preparing the sound system for a local D.J. This is all part of their funeral custom in Ghana. The departed may have been buried weeks or even months ago, but now the family had accumulated enough money to pay for the food and drinks, in what is their form of a wake. Actually, the term "celebration" is quite accurate in the Christian context. We, who are left living on earth, celebrate that our departed loved one is in Heaven enjoying the victory of Jesus' resurrection and ultimate blessing of his/her faith – eternal life with God.

After lunch it was the typical Sunday afternoon and evening of a pastor in any country: a good nap and a light supper. Pastor Fynn will stop by later to discuss tomorrow's workshop on Isaiah with the seminary students.

Should anyone be moved to e-mail me, I am having difficulties with my Yahoo address. Please feel free to contact me at revmrblack@hotmail.com I cannot promise you an immediate reply but your message will be most welcomed.

Please keep us in your prayers, as you are in ours.

God bless you,

Pastor George and Ron Crouse

Picture one: the youth calling people to worship at 6:00 a.m.

Picture two: worship at the other St. Paul's – St. Paul's in Accra, Ghana, West Africa

Picture three: St. Paul's Praise Team