

## Letter from Ghana

*Luke's parents have now been in Ghana for nearly six weeks. In this first letter, they write about the welcome they have received and appeal for donations to their primary school.*

The welcome we have received in our first weeks here has been tremendous. We have shaken so many hands, and been supplied with cars and drivers whenever required and responded with smiles to the shouts from the children of "Bruni, Bruni, how are you? I am fine. How do you do?"

One of the first impressions has to be the noise since there are dogs barking, birds singing, cockerels crowing, sheep (tails down) and goats (tails up) bleating and car horns. The latter are used as a sign of approach to everything and anybody. People are often having pleasure in singing or drumming. The service at Nkanfoa is noisy with drumming as the accompaniment. Last Sunday, during the offertory it went on non stop for 30 minutes and the drummer is only 12 or 13! It is no good if you are a light sleeper!

A second impression is the fact that life is lived in the open so as you walk around there are people who are seeing you and gradually getting to recognise you as you pass along the street and they may even stop to talk to you. In the streets there are goats and sheep and chickens all over the town and you wonder why there are not any sign of them being run over. Children are being washed by buckets outside, hair being cut and styled and many, many shops and stalls selling kenkey, fruit, bread and anything you care to name. There are many "cottage" industries, all trying to earn a living. Many of the shops have references to God or Jesus in the names, e.g. *By His Grace Communication, God First Chop Bar, God is in Control Tie Dye Centre*, etc.

A third impression is of the poor state of the buildings and infrastructure, the road from Accra is very poor until just outside Cape Coast when it suddenly gets very good. Most buildings look as if a good strong puff of wind would flatten them. The drains are little better than open sewers in many places so if you have a sensitive nose you will take some getting used to it. After almost two weeks in Cape Coast we notice it less and are slowly becoming attuned.

A fourth impression is that you often feel like needing a suitcase in which to carry your money. When we paid our car insurance— 7 200 000 cedis (533 pounds sterling)— most of it was in 5 000 cedi notes and the clerk in the office nearly collapsed at the sight of 1 440 bank notes packed into tight bundles. Interestingly enough the ForEx offices are very low key places with little sign of security and most Ghanaians ignore you as you go about your financial business. The one ATM at Barclays is slow because of the need to count vast numbers of notes and is forever running out of notes so when it goes off-line you just hang about for a few minutes while they reload the money!

We have needed to learn patience; waiting for a car to

arrive (or not) which due to a mistake may be three hours after you were expecting it. We have still to learn that although many people's English is good, it is still a second language and sometimes, though they may appear to understand, someone may not have fully understood.



We have attended the 7 am English service at Wesley Methodist Cathedral which seemed more, in British terms, like the Church of England with a liturgy including the *Te Deum* and Apostles Creed. We have been to the 9.30 Fante-language service at Nkanfoa, the village where we are working and in which the school is situated. This is much more lively with drumming and dancing very much part of the worship. The rhythm of the clapping during the hymns, etc. is different from England, two clap beats followed by two beats rest, repeated continuously.

On our second Tuesday the steward from Nkanfoa came bearing two bags of food (including 30 eggs!) for us as a welcome gift from the church. Their generosity from their comparative little is wonderful to see as is their helpfulness. We were in the market looking for flour and as we enquired at one stall which did not sell it, the seller took us to another which did. It is not unusual to find the seller asleep but if you wish to buy you just wake them up! The people look out for each other, particularly children, whom you see carrying around a smaller child.

Our house is really good, except for the kitchen which we hope to improve over the time we are here. Outside upstairs is a balcony extending across the end and down the two long sides. The end balcony is really a sun-deck (over the garage) where we hang the outside washing (for clothing which will be ironed as it is important that the putsi fly larvae are killed by ironing). The access is up a one in four gradient, ours being the middle of three Methodist properties. The drive is presently a dirt surface but there is a plan to tar it when the money is found. The grounds around are extensive with a mango and a pawpaw and beautiful flowering trees such as jacaranda.

We have now had a good look at the school with Ian making a list of fairly urgent major or minor jobs which ideally need dealing with in the next few months before we consider a longer term project. Like everything else, if the premises are left to their own devices there is deterioration and some things require an eye for minor detail. It is very important that something is done about the toilets facilities as at present there are only two toilets (hole on concrete) and a girls and boys urinal which are next to each other. These were built for the pre-school children, up to six years, but now the school has five more classes (45 in each) the existing toilets are totally inadequate. The agreed plan is to build a suite at one end of the two-storey block which cannot be flushing toilets as the school cannot afford the water bill.

There is also a desperate need for reading books in group sets, about 6-8 of the same book. There are some good ones which are written for African schools available in Accra costing just over one pound sterling apiece and so for both of these projects we ask that if you feel able

# Building Together News



The final amount raised from the Scafell Pike climb is £858 with Gift Aid. Thank you once again to all who braved the mountain and to their sponsors. Also, many thanks to Dave Ridout for leading the event. Dave's sheet about the proposed Ben Nevis climb next May is still on the Fund-raising noticeboard for any brave soul who would like to take part.

## The Cube Concert

A small but select group of folk enjoyed last weekend's concert and £220.15 was raised. Our thanks to all who supported the event as well as to Mike Cushing and the lads.

## Craft Fair

The Craft Fair was very successful, bringing in to the church a lot of folk from outside. With Gift Aid, over £900 was raised. Thank you to all who helped and in particular to Edna Armstrong for arranging the event.

## Harvest Home at 66, Conway Drive

About thirty folk enjoyed Joyce and Allan's hospitality over the two days and the excellent sum of £108 was raised. Our thanks go to Joyce and Allan and to all who supported the event.

## Forthcoming events

### Pansy Sale

This will be held on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> October from 1 pm to 3 pm in the Church hall. Winter pansies, heathers and perennials will be on sale. Advance order forms are available in the Church porch and in the passage. If you have not completed one, please do so before you leave after the service and give it to Barbara who will be in the Hall. The perennials are not included on the forms so come to the sale to see the range. There will be plenty of pansies, etc. at the sale if you have not had an opportunity to complete a form.

### Opera Plus Concert

*Opera Plus* is a group of highly talented singers with a considerable following. Copies of some of their previous programmes are on the Fund-raising noticeboard in the corridor. This will take place on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30 pm in church. Tickets, costing £7.50 and including supper, are on sale today or contact Barbara Hothersall ☎716203.

### Christmas Fair

The Christmas Fair will be held on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> December. Over the next few weeks we will be publishing details and making appeals— so watch this space!

to make a donation, then please give Luke or Kate a cheque payable to Mr. & Mrs. I. C. Bosman, which will be paid in to our UK account opened specifically for the school.

If any of you have a contact with a local school which may be turning out old class readers then some of these may be suitable. Children or grandchildren may have books they no longer require which, provided they are in good condition, may help us enormously for stocking the library. Non-fiction should be reasonably up-to-date and fiction should not be too western. The illustrations often have a western slant to them. Let us know what you have and we will work out a way of collecting them when we are in England in April.

One parable which has been particularly important to Diana over the years is that of the Sheep and the Goats.

Since coming here, it has become more challenging.

Since coming here we have had many people calling at the door seeking money which in our terms has been very, very little. The Bishop, the Superintendent Minister, and even the night watchman have all told us not to give at the door but it is hard to be, as we see it, hard hearted. We have agreed with the Bishop that callers are sent to the minister at Wesley and if there they feel they are genuine they may help if they have the money. If they have not got the money but still feel the need is genuine they will call us by phone and send the person back to us. The church has a weekly offering for the poor and we want to give generously to that fund. Perhaps once the system starts to work with people being sent from the church to us we will feel less guilty. We also have to learn how to get this across in Fante as many callers do not understand sufficient English and unless a watchman is around we are unable to get the message across.

## Contributions

Contributions to NftP are always welcome— space is rarely a worry! We would be particularly pleased to publish any church family news.

Please send all items for inclusion to [nftp@shrimper.org.uk](mailto:nftp@shrimper.org.uk) or the pigeonhole in the corridor by the Sunday prior to publication.

## Prayer Requests:

God's strength to carry out His work; the teachers and children at Nkanfoa; the fund raising for the school; Kathryn Larrard at Wesley Girls School as an EEP Exchange Partner; The Methodist Church in Ghana.