

Allegheny Conference Churches Partner with Seminary in Ghana

This past May, teams from University Mennonite Church in State College, Pa., and Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Belleville, Pa., traveled to Accra, Ghana, and spent a week there forming new relationships with staff and students at the Good News Theological College and Seminary. The trip came about as a result of a vision that University and Maple Grove churches shared: to form a partnership of mutuality and trust with a church institution in another part of the world. The seminary in Ghana was chosen because of a connection University already had—a family who have attended the church for 30 years, Kwadwo and Fran Osseo-Asare and their three children.

Kwadwo is originally from Ghana. Currently he and Fran are on sabbatical at the University of Ghana, enabling them to help with local arrangements for the trip. The teams—David Miller, Liz Hunsberger, and Jim Rosenberger from University and Jared Byler, Jolene Byler, and Alan and Nancy Kauffman from Maple Grove—spent time at the seminary, talking and worshipping with students and meeting with staff and the board of governors to share our congregations' vision and mission. There was also time for fellowship, soccer, sharing food (including mangoes and plantains, a treat for the Americans), and late-night conversations between the younger team members and seminary students.

For Alan Kauffman, pastor of Maple Grove, the cultural experience was unforgettable: "Every time we traveled through Accra," he recalls, "I experienced sensory overload: congested traffic, exotic colors and



smells, 'calls to prayer' sounding, buyers bartering, horns honking, miles of poverty. I could not take it all in."

Liz Hunsberger of University returned home with treasured memories of new friendships. "Near the end of our time there," she says, "a staff member at the seminary told us that two things happened during our stay that had never happened before: no other visitors spent so much time with the students, and no American visitors ever held meetings outside, under the trees!" Liz and other team mem-

Maple Grove and University teams pose by a sign for Good News.

AC Churches Partner with Seminary in Ghana, cont.



Top: Members of Maple Grove and University presented Good News Theological College and Seminary with a banner designed and made by University's visuals committee. Above: New friends in Ghana.

bers were also touched by the gift of colorful Ghanaian shirts, dresses, and stoles, presented as good-bye gifts by the staff and students.

Good News Seminary is undergoing exciting changes. Recently accredited by the government, the school is poised to expand its facilities, including building a chapel, library, new classroom buildings, and additions to dormitories. Another goal is to find an affiliation with a university, so Good News can expand its curriculum to include secular studies such as business management, information technology, and other courses that would eventually lead to a bachelor's degree. This would make the college more self-supporting on tuition, and would help equip the ministers being trained to be bi-vocational, so they can support their families while providing leadership and ministering to their church. Thomas Oduro, the principal of Good News seminary, will visit the U.S. in October to explore these possibilities. At that time, University and Maple Grove hope to finalize a partnership plan for the next few years.

"I'm hoping the passion and dedication shown by the faculty, staff, and board of governors of Good News can inspire us as we seek ways to partner with them to further the mission of our churches," says Jim Rosenberger, UMC team member. "I have high hopes that our partnership will be mutually beneficial," adds Alan Kauffman. "We have, they have. We need, they need. I see potential, on our end, for providing scholarships for students at Good News; for professors to go and spend a semester or year there; for work teams to serve there; for connecting more closely with the Mennonite Church in Ghana. "And I see potential for us to benefit greatly from these relationships," he continues. "I was so blessed by the Ghanaian hospitality and worship. A gentler, kinder, more gracious and spiritually alive people I have yet to meet. They have much to teach North Americans if we will stop, listen, and learn."

—Krista Weidner, University

Visit Good News Theological College and Seminary on the Web at www.GNTCS.org

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