

# MY TRIP TO



## AFRICA

BY  
JOY BRUNSKILL

### MY VISIT TO GHANA WITH THE 12 BY 12 SERVING AFRICA TEAM By Joy Brunskill

We arrived in Ghana at about 7pm and an official took the party to one side and examined our passports together as a party so we did not have to go through the immigration with everyone else. We were not sure if this was because the Bishop had told them to look out for us or if it was because we were white, but we went through the VIP door. We would have all got through really quickly but someone's case had been put on the wrong collection point.

Jim was waiting outside to meet us along with Mary and the Bishop. We went to the base where Jim stays when he is in Ghana for a brief chat before we went to our hotel. The next morning we were up at 7a.m. as we were being picked up at 8.30 to be taken to a western hotel to have a relaxing day by the pool after our travelling, and to prepare us for what was to come. The journey there in the mini buses was



fascinating as there were so many people on the streets. The roads were lined with people selling things from small tables or booths, women and children carrying bowls or baskets on their heads filled with everything you could think of.

Children would often sell chewing gum or sweets or bread, while women would sell cakes or water, fruit or nappies, all piled high on top of their heads. I saw one man with a basket filled with live chickens, bound up and rammed together into a basket perfectly balanced on his head! You could buy anything by the roadside, bunk beds three piece suites and toilets would line the roadside along with bald tyres and I even saw coffins for sale.

On the Saturday we had some teaching at the Centre of Faith Church and met the African ladies who were to join us for the first time, we split into groups for part of the teaching and some of the women gave me some pieces of scripture to read which they felt the Lord had prompted them to share with me: these verses helped me so much over the next week.

Later that day we all came together at the base and chose the fabric we wanted which was to be made up into an African dress, we had all paid for our African sisters to be fitted out and it was lovely to see them all choose and be measured, I chose an orange fabric which turned out to be one of the traditional patterns of Ghana. We all sat together to eat our meal in the garden.

That evening I started to feel unwell. I don't normally cope well with the heat and it soon became clear that I

would not be able to go with the team to church at Winneba the next day and, before everyone left, I did my party trick and fainted in front of everyone and vomited all over the place. So embarrassing! I spent the next two days resting, God really spoke to me over those days and this gave me the strength to cope with the rest of the mission as I didn't completely recover until I had been home some time. On the second day of my illness one of our team, Betty came and washed my feet for me. This act of kindness really spoke to me as I saw the spiritual aspect of this, and felt as though it was the Lord himself who had done this for me (which of course he had) I was deeply moved by this and I still cry when I think about it.

Another team member gave me these words from Psalm 119 v 71 *'It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.'* Later that afternoon Sarah arrived with the finished dresses, it was lovely to see everyone dressed up. We all sat together in the garden and the African ladies all stated to sing together: it was a very moving moment.

The hotel we stayed in was very nice, we were very blessed as it had a generator which would kick in when there was a power cut so we were still able to use the air conditioning and we also had a constant supply of running water.



I shared a room with Rebecca which was nice and we were able to look out for each other. Rebecca was given the task of "water monitor", and she made sure we all had plenty of bottled water every day. Our room overlooked what I at first thought was out buildings but soon realised that these were family homes. I saw the women sweeping up and doing the washing from an outside tap. The homes were smaller than an average sized garage at home and I thought these people must be very poor but after a couple of days I realised that these were some of the better houses to live in.

Tuesday started very early, we were picked up in the mini buses to take us to Akropong. The journey took nearly two hours and we were stopped twice on the way by armed border guards which was a bit scary.

When we arrived at Akropong it was discovered that the pastor had not bothered to tell the women that we were coming as he didn't think it was important. Jim was not impressed! So, after discussion, we decided to go out on to the streets and invite the women in our selves.

We split into groups and I went out with Beatrice, one of the African members of the team, and we spoke to several women. One lady we spoke to was sitting by a fire with her daughter who was about seven years of age. The lady was sewing a pattern onto a piece of fabric and Beatrice spoke to her in her own language. The lady told us that her son had just died and that she was

preparing for his funeral. Beatrice asked her if she wanted us to pray for her and she said she did. She called her little girl over and we prayed for them both by the fire.

When we got back to the church about 50 ladies turned up, some of them had left their market stalls and had changed into their best clothes. There were two really old ladies among them and Mary took one of them by the hand to the front of the church to dance with the rest of the women and the old lady had tears in her eyes.

Mary taught from the front and used the team with drama and story telling and some team members gave a testimony. The women were encouraged to come forward for prayer at the end of the meeting and most of them came forward. The programme had to be cut short due to the late start.

Before we left I realised I would have to 'brave it' and go to the loo. The loo, which was outside and behind the church, was a walled area with no roof and no door and a simple pile of stones "to go on". We had been instructed not to squat as the bugs will jump! "Go like the Africans standing up." (there is a knack to it) I thought to myself, 'Who am I to complain when this is normal for the people who live here,' so got on with it!

We travelled to the Eastern Pearl, which is another of the projects that the Serving Africa Mission has, for a snack of biscuits and soft drinks before we had more teaching. We also went over the programme for Thursday and Friday. The garden at the Pearl was lovely with lots of lizards scurrying about and butterflies and birds. We took a different route back and passed

villages that were made out of mud huts, these houses were no worse to live in than some of the wooden or brick built houses I had seen and this surprised me. The area was surrounded by Banana trees and other tropical plants. We had another meal at the base that evening.

Wednesday was another rest day which we spent by



the pool again. Our African sisters went to the market. When we all met up in the evening the African ladies had brought us all a gift of a bracelet. They had bought the team leaders special ones with different beads which were traditionally worn by the queens of the tribes. Three of us had brought gifts for the women which were given out on different days. One lady brought handmade handkerchiefs, while another had made the ladies a bag each. I had brought them some earrings I had made at home. They were really pleased with the gifts they had received.

On Thursday the teams split into their groups and went to their different places, I was in Mary's team and we headed for Winneba, we were to stay in a guest house for two nights, this was another lovely place to stay but this one didn't have the generator to back up the supply when the power was cut, it also had a problem with the water supply as some times we had it and sometimes not but it was a very homely place to stay. And I continued to share a room with Rebecca who makes very strange noises in her sleep!

The Church in Winneba had the lovely name of "Jesus Disciples Bible Love Cross Church".



The Church building was wooden and painted green white and red, it had red and white gingham curtains at the windows tied with red white and green ribbon and the inside of the church was decorated with red white

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whom were naked, were running around in the dirt with chickens, pigs and goats. These children loved to come and chat and would want you to take photographs and pose just like children at home.

Many people came to the service. Mary preached and we used the same programme we had used on Tuesday at Akropong. The main aim was to show the women that God uses women and gives them spiritual gifts to build up the church. We used drama, which the people loved, and I gave a testimony while the team told the people



stories of women of the Bible to show them that God still uses ordinary folk like them to do his work. After the service we went out in groups with church members to talk to people in the surrounding streets. I found this very humbling, we visited one home and they rushed to find me a chair to sit on, they gave me a chair first and I knew that this was because I was white. I found this very difficult. We spoke to the people and Beatrice translated

and green bunting. The musical instruments were drums, bongos and a cow bell hit with a spanner, and in the evenings a keyboard and sometimes a trumpet as well as Tambourines.

When we first arrived we went out to invite people to the service. Most people were happy to talk. The children in particular came running to us as most had never seen white people before and wanted to touch us and try out their English.



The church was in a very poor area close to the coast and some of the people there were fishermen, they would catch the fish and then smoke them over wood burning ovens before selling them. The main catch was herrings.

Although I knew I would see poverty in Africa nothing could really prepare me for the things I saw. There was no proper sanitation and you could see that many of the people were suffering from illness. The children, many of

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for us. I told them the story of how, as Jesus calmed the stormy sea, He can help us to face the storms in our own lives if we trust in him. However, whilst He doesn't always calm the storm for us, He always helps us to face our fears. We prayed with the family before we left.

The Church at Winneba is planning to build a new church and the pastor was keen for us to visit the site and for us to pray over it. A member of the church had a taxi and he drove us to the site. It was a very scary drive up hills and down ditches until we arrived, especially as the taxi had two large cracks across the windscreen and no seat belts. He dropped us off and then went back for



the rest of the team. We waited under the shade of a tree and someone appeared from nowhere with some chairs for us to sit on. We had a snack of biscuits and soft drinks until everyone finally arrived and we were able to pray over the land and ask for God's blessing.

We then went back to the guest house to a rest before the evening service.

The church was full for the evening service and we were asked to sit up on the platform as we were the guests. It was lovely to see the people worship and dancing before the Lord, the ladies would wave their handkerchiefs and dance together then the men would all get up and do their bit. The music was so loud that my ears hurt. Half way through the service the legs on the key board snapped and it went crashing to the floor they guy stood with his hands out stretched in shock until someone came running with a box to stand it on and he continued to play. I was very good and managed not to giggle, after all, I was sat at the front for everyone to see and in a place of honour, and so I somehow managed to contain myself. At the end of the service people came forward for prayer and I noticed that people would push to the front so that a white person would pray for them many people wanted me to lay hands on their children.

The next morning was another early start and I was starting to feel really unwell again. As I sat at the breakfast table I prayed that God would give me strength for the day as I didn't think I would be able to cope. I started to drink a cup of tea and suddenly felt myself being filled with energy, the more I drank the stronger I felt. No other cup of tea I had drank before, or since, has had the effect that that cup of tea did. I am sure that God put something special into it, it certainly had some "Oooooo"! I even managed to eat a bit of breakfast.

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house that we should have stayed in on the site is also incomplete, although it is possible to see how lovely it will be when the work is finished. Had we been able to stay there it would have saved us a lot of travelling around. The area around is very beautiful with lovely with lots of tropical trees and the guest house looks out towards the hills. Nearby you can also see a Muslim temple.

The women were very excited about the building of Lydia house as they knew that it would make a lasting difference to the lives of women like them selves. To be able to learn how to sew and cook in order to support their families means a great deal to them. One of our team members whose name was "Gifty" said, as we stepped on to the land, 'welcome to my home'

The other teams were bringing people from the churches too. One team got held up in the traffic and only just got there in time.

The Bishop wore his new suit which had been bought for him as a gift for his birthday the day before and he proudly showed it off. Jim preached and taught the people, and they sang and danced in worship to God. There were lots of musical instruments and lots of trumpets. I was stood next to the trumpet players at the front and my ears were ringing. Everyone had their best clothes on and I noticed the children had new outfits. We all wore our African dresses.

Mary was commissioned to take on the role of the women's work in Africa in a moving ceremony. At this point the African sisters left to go back to their homes with the people from their churches and we travelled

The service that morning followed a similar plan as the day before, reinforcing the teaching with story telling, drama and testimony. At the end of the Service we were also presented with a gift of a piece of fabric with a traditional pattern of Ghana on it that had been made to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Ghana. After the service we again prayed for people then we went out again to talk to the people in the streets.

We spoke to a lovely family who had lots of children, the little ones ran away when they saw me as they hadn't seen a white person before and they were frightened. Yvonne told the children a story and then she asked if it was OK for us to pray for them. The children all knelt down when we prayed and said a loud "Amen" at the end. They were so beautiful.

The evening service went well with lots of dance and Mary preached again. The people at Winneba were lovely. They were very poor but loved to worship the Lord and would come to church in their best clothes looking spotlessly clean. They were so friendly and really made us welcome, they made a big impression on me and I will never forget them.

Saturday was another very early start as we were to be picked up to travel to Lydia house for a celebration service. The people from the church in Winneba were coming and Rebecca and Betty travelled with them in the bus and the people sang all the way. I travelled in the taxi, four of us in the back seat for a journey that took well over three hours, we were all squashed in and it was extremely uncomfortable. Lydia house was far from finished and it was very disappointing. The guest

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back for a meal at the base. Finally we went back to the first hotel for one more night.

Sunday morning we spent back at the Centre of Faith church for another lovely service and the Bishop's little girl stood up at the front and sang to us.

I will never forget the time I spent in Ghana, I struggled a great deal with the heat and feeling unwell but I learned a great deal. The people were lovely so kind and welcoming, I loved to see the babies being carried around on their mothers backs and the babies seemed to be so contented and I didn't see one pushchair in all the time I was there. I shall never forget watching Vultures circling overhead over the homes of the poor and all the beautiful children. I came home from Africa



with much more than I went with (including head lice) and I am so glad that God asked me to go.