

Ghana Travel Blog – 2011 By Mike Wellbon

08/10/11

Amazing day of working with the children of Marfo Children's Home. We laughed, played, sang, and did arts and crafts from 10am to 6pm. It was amazing. I only have one picture right now, but will post more after I take a shower and eat. Connectivity is very slow currently, but I'll do the best I can. This is a young girl who was on the bus I took yesterday. She was a little angel.

08/03/2011

Full day! Clinic from 8am to 4pm, THEN Dr. Karlen starts surgery. We had 5 surgeries and then another three exams at 8pm. We finally finished serving all the men, women and children in the clinic, 88 of them, at 9pm. We just finished dinner and now I'm heading to bed. We have a bus to catch at 6am which will take us the 4 hours back to Tema. Total romancing the stone moment I'm sure. :-) More later...

8/02/2011

We made it to Cape Coast today & jumped right in. We went directly to the eye clinic, and our surgeon changed into his scrubs and entered the operation theater. We looked on as he helped the resident surgeon complete a difficult cataract surgery. I shot a bunch of footage of the clinic and surgery and now we're back at the hotel preparing for tomorrow's full day of 12 eye surgeries

8/01/2011

After three flights, and stops in Detroit, Amsterdam, and finally Accra, we arrived in Ghana one day after we left San Francisco. The flights were long and somewhat austere, being on older airplanes for all three flights. However, the mood was light and the entire team was excited and eager to get started. We were greeted at the airport by our ministry and team leader Charles Narh, who masterfully shepherded us through customs and led us out of the airport and into the warm night beyond. The air was very humid, and was full of the familiar smoky odor of wood burning fires. The smell is unlike a campfire, and is more akin to the smell of a trash burn one might experience in rural America. It's 11pm and we're loading up in vans which will carry us, and our 10 mission suitcases to our final destination, the Kesdem Hotel in Tema. By the time we checked in, got our rooms and got into bed, it was well past 1am.

We arose the next morning at 7am, so we could make the several hour drive to the Christian Eye Clinic in Cape Coast. After hurriedly devouring a little breakfast, the Cape Coast team went out to the car to pack up the many suitcases for the journey. There were three of us on the team, myself, Kris Karlen the optical surgeon, and a medical supply and equipment representative Gene De Juan. The ride was rich with interesting sights and experiences and the genuine feel Ghana has. On our ride we indulged in "Meat Pies" a delicious meat filled pastry with a heavily buttered and flaky crust, and Plantain Chips. A ride through the countryside of Ghana just isn't complete without Meat Pies, Plantain Chips, and water

served in a plastic bag. All these things are purveyed from a woman who is carrying the massive load of her goods upon her head.

As we arrived in Cape Coast we were quickly shown the clinic and then whisked away to the hotel for a very brief check in and dump of our bags. Driving directly back to the clinic, we jumped right in. Immediately upon arrival we heard that the resident surgeon was having a bit of a “stressful” time with a particularly difficult cataract surgery, so our surgeon changed into his scrubs and entered the operation theater. We looked on as he talked through his analysis and helped successfully complete the surgery. The patient arose and went into post-op and the next patient was prepped and the surgery began again. One after the other the patients were prepped, operated on, and sent to post-op, as the next patient would lay down for the whole process to begin again. This went on well into the evening. We finally emerged from the clinic around 6pm.

Our hotel was just a short ride down a very bumpy, rut and pothole filled dirt road. The surgeon from the clinic was kind enough to give us a ride and we piled into the hotel to order dinner and eat a much needed meal. The evening was full of great stories and remembrances of the exciting and enriching experiences we just shared. It was such a joyful feeling to take part in such amazing and life changing service. These people have serious eye problems and little means to be cured of their afflictions. They wait months or even years to get the nearly free services we provide, and some travel for days and over hundreds of miles to come to the clinic for surgery. Some even come all the way from the neighboring countries of Togo and the Ivory Coast. As we recapped the day’s events, we noted the time, 8pm. We hadn’t even been in Ghana for 24 hours.

8/01/2011

Hey all. After a day of flying I made it to Ghana safe and sound. I'm at the Kesdem Hotel in Tema and am headed to Cape Coast tomorrow morning to start our surgical mission. I'll post more when I can. Internet here is really slow. :(

7/21/2011

I get my passport back on Monday!! Wohooo! I'm stamped with my Ghana Visa and I have a full three year Visa pass, so I can go back as many times as I am called in the next 3 years. I'll get a picture up Monday. Now I need to figure out how to get 9 cubic feet of stuffed animals in a 4 cubic foot suitcase. The children are going to be so excited. This is what I call a “Quality Problem”. Peace and love to all.

7/09/2011

I'm going to Ghana again, where we'll be performing eye surgery for the needy. They will enter the eye clinic essentially blind, and after three days, they will leave with 20/20 vision. I ask you to support this cause. I have three primary functions, but once you get into the mission, people start to wear many hats and fulfill many needs. First and foremost, I'm in support of the medical mission. I will work with the surgeons and the nurses to transport and supply medical equipment and supplies for the two week mission. I serve in this capacity in any way they need help. My primary function there is as videographer

and photographer. It's my job to document the surgeries, the people, families and communities in the story, and the story of the lives changed by the procedure. Finally, I'll be visiting the Marfo children's home to deliver needed medical and comfort aid, toys and money.

6/24/2011

I'm going to Ghana again, where we'll be performing eye surgery for the needy. They will enter the eye clinic essentially blind, and after three days, they will leave with 20/20 vision. I ask you to support this cause. Most the money is raised, but we still need about \$2,000 for me perform my service there. That's 20 people at \$100, or 40 at \$50. Can you be one of those people?

6/21/2011

I'm going to Ghana July 27th to serve in a medical eye surgery mission and to revisit Marfo Children's Home. If you feel passionate about helping people to regain their vision, or the support of homeless orphans, I would encourage you to pledge a small amount to this cause. I will be there personally to document the mission and will report back on the success.

5/31/2011

Together we can show our benevolence and meet our needs, under God, and to his glory and kingdom. I for one will serve in July. I will watch those people come in blind and leave productive members of their family, community and their country. As you know, I will go, and can serve, only by the grace of God. YOU ARE THAT GRACE. I have not the resources to serve on this trip, but I feel this is the next leg of my journey into missionary work full time.

If anyone of you hear this message, if anyone of you say, I wish I had the money to go, or I wish I had the time, or the freedom to go, please support this mission, and the need it will have for members like us. I will serve with Charles in July the same way I served in May. I will give my all! I will capture the story, bring back the evidence of glory, and ideas on how to serve these people with more gifts of the spirit.

I call on all of you now to please pledge \$100, or \$200, or whatever your responsible capacity is, to send me back to support Brother Narh and to be the servant you know I am. You all know these trips are not easy, but I would lay down my every comfort as a sacrifice to serve again. If you could all pass this message along to someone who cares about the usefulness of a human and the vision needs of Ghana, I would appreciate your partnership in the success HIOTWM has demonstrated and committed again.

4/09/2011

Entrepreneurial Ghana

3/30/2011

While Ghana is a well developed country there are still issues with joblessness and poverty, much like in the United States. Unlike the United States, infrastructure here in Ghana is lacking, so moving goods and providing services is difficult over large geographies. Because of this, most businesses operate

locally. Imagine the United States before the industrial revolution, when businesses were owned by a family, and the family worked at their street side shop and lived in their loft above the shop. Everything was business centric, with the business being the life line, and future prosperity of the family. Anyone who wanted to offer goods or services, and were willing to do the work required to build their own business, and make their own piece of the “American Dream” could do it. Almost everyone was an entrepreneur or contractor before the industrial revolution, and so it is here in Tema, Ghana as well. Americans had a dream of a business or service they could provide so they too could carve out their own slice of prosperity for their family. If you could conceive it, you could achieve it, and that is how it remained until factories and employers offered job security in exchange for entrepreneurial prosperity.

The independent owner/operator entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well here in Ghana. I can't speak for all of Ghana, but in Tema, and in every developed city and rural village we have had the pleasure of visiting so far, almost everyone is a business owner or contractor of some sort. Not to say that people don't work in stores and malls, they do, but so many more Ghanaians choose entrepreneurial pursuits. The people here don't all have jobs, and it's very poor, so if they want a job they need to start their own little business. For that reason you'll see hundreds of people on the roads trying to sell things. Some have little booths set up with service windows and nice signs, and some just walk up and down the street at red lights or speed bump areas, waiting for a chance to hawk goods to a slowed or stopped car.

As for the shacks on the side of the road, you can buy anything from airtime minutes for your cellular phone to hand made wood carved furniture. You can have your car worked on, your motorcycle or your bicycle. I saw TV repair shacks, food shacks, snack shacks, water and juice shacks, money changer shacks, and just about every imaginable good or service sold right on the side of the road, from a log, a table or a shack. All they need is a product or a service, and a little hand written sign, and they are in business for themselves and making a living for their family. I saw one guy sitting on a log on the ground, on the side of the road. He was dressed in nice clothing and talking on a cell phone. He was sitting in the shade of a tree, and posted on one of the lower limbs of the tree was a hand written sign which read, “Laptop Repair”. Amazing! The faith, gratitude and drive these people have is both inspiring and humbling. If Americans could only see what the average Ghanaian goes through to make a living, there would never be another union strike ever. These people have my respect, as well as my love and service.

March 28th, 2011

The Bead Market

As our side trip today, between morning and evening church at the revival we're conducting, we went out to the town of Odumase in West Ghana. As we rode the bus, our one constant experience in our ever shifting environments, I started to shoot pictures of the interesting or emotionally moving content. The camera we bought is excellent, but it was still quite a challenge to shoot meaningful pictures at 100kph, through a windshield. I feel blessed and honored to hold the responsibility of recording our trip. It has challenged me to keep a vigilant eye on the visual aspect of our travels, through which, I have had a richer experience.

As we traveled we passed through much jungle landscape and low lying lush plains. The scenery was vibrant, and exceedingly green. It was as if you were to take all the green colors you've ever seen, and spattered them off the tip of a brush, and onto a blue canvas. The only thing which wasn't green was the sky, which was a beautiful, rich light blue as far as the eye could see. Most the foliage stays close to the ground, which is mostly flat. The one exception to this is large, thin trunk trees which stretch 10 to 15 stories into the sky. They are unique looking because they have a light colored trunk which seems disproportionately narrow for their size do the tree. The canopy is bright green with limbs turned upward, long and smooth all the way to the tips, where there is a tuft of leaves. Imagine a head of tree like Broccoli stuck atop a skewer and you will have a similar vision of these trees. They are very Dr. Suisse looking.

We wound our way through the jungle until green space became spotted with thatched roofed mud huts, and then finally the sparsely spaced jungle huts gave way to the small town of Odumase. Brick and mud homes covered in plaster and topped with corrugated steel roves lined both sides of the two-lane pothole covered blacktop. We snaked through narrow streets with deep concrete open storm drains on either side, with street vendors beyond. With their small lemonade stand like store fronts, they lined each side of the street, side by side, like as many books on a shelf. Their colorful wears sat on every surface and hung in every open space. From afar the products appeared as multi-colored jelly beans in a large glass jar.

We finally arrived at an open field and turned in on a dirt road worn into the natural Bermuda grass. On our left was a sort of small market of the tent pole and awning covered table vendors, synonymous with outdoor flea markets. On our right was a partially built concrete structure where dozens of people gathered about. We pulled in between those two places and the bus stopped to let us out.

The market vendors were almost all women, typically large, jolly women who were quick to point out the quality and selection of their goods. I realized everything for sale was made of beads. There were thousands of beads, of millions of colorful designs. They were beautiful, and unmistakably African. Our host explained the market was the largest African trade bead market in Ghana, and one of the largest in all of Africa. He went on to say the "Kuno", the high chief, wanted to increase the notoriety, exposure, manufacturing, and distribution of their locally designed, manufactured, and hand crafted beads and jewelry.

Each booth was an amazing display of bulk individual beads of all sizes, and hand crafted earrings, bracelets, and necklaces. On each table it was as if a dump truck had dropped a load of every hard candy you have ever seen. We were released to shop at will, and shop we did. Given my resources and the priority I place on global outreach missions, I could really only justify one purchase, and that was a necklace for my mother. I wanted a bracelet for myself, but struggled to part with the money. I did find some nice beads shaped like the country of Ghana, and colored in the colors of the Ghanaian flag. I parted with some money for several of them to serve as gifts for friends and family.

After making my rounds to the bead vendors I turned to the many people working in and around the unfinished building in the center of the fields. Outside around the building was some sort of food

preparers. Some, it seemed, were women cooking for themselves, or possibly a group of people they worked with. But some of the women were clearly making food items to sell in support of the bead makers and sellers. Inside the open air shell of a building were piles of loose beads. They were clumped on cloth, in rows, beside them the creator of those particular beads sat waiting to answer questions and take orders. These piles beads and dozens of bead makers filled the place with the echoing sounds of lively negotiations and trading, much like the spectacle of the floor of a stock exchange.

Coupled with the dense and vibrant chatter was the smell of pottery or glass melting, and the sent only experienced when around very high heat. It was then I noticed some of the women were heating glass and other material, no doubt to become one of the thousands of beads on display. The whole scene was exotic and stunning.

Seemingly from nowhere appeared a group of percussionists. They carried drums and Bongos of all sorts along with molded plastic lawn chairs. The chairs were the sort you see at Safeway or Target in the summer. They lined up their chairs in a group and began to position their instruments and warm up. It was then our host snatched us up and herded us towards the beating drums. "The villagers have prepared a traditional dance ceremony for you. Come, let's see".

Sure enough, there then gathered a dozen women or more. They were all wearing traditional tribal wraps of some sort. Some of the women were young, and incredibly ornately dressed. The girls were assisted by women who buzzed around them, primping and adjusting. They were the equivalent of a night's squire, following behind their lord adjusting his armor. It turns out, the girls were marriage age virgins, and in the custom of their tribe, they were to perform a bead dance to show their wealth and beauty. The women in support were the family of each prospective bride, dutifully preparing their beloved daughter or niece for here suitors.

The girls were covered in the traditional African Trade Beads which surrounded us on all sides. Each girl had on the typical earring, bracelet and necklaces one would expect to see a woman in, but there were decorated far beyond that. They had beads in their hair, beads ringing their necks, their arms, waist, ankles, and crisscrossing their chest like ammunition bandoliers. The colors of the beads contrasted and complemented the brilliant colors of their beautiful wraps.

Soon the drums began to beat and the girls took their places in a line, gently shaking their hips and softly stepping forward in a highly controlled, toe-to-heel motion. Their eyes always faced the ground and showed intense concentration, and their arms softly swayed with their hips, and opening and closing with various digits exposed to form ever changing hand signals. The dance was exquisite, enticing and alluring.

The performance is intended to attract eligible men, and it does. If a man is interested, he is to show his interest and thanks for her beautiful dance by pressing money to her forehead. She continues her dance, and the paper money falls from her head and his hands, floating down to the ground where it is promptly snatched up by the girl's family. Once tribute has been paid, the man chooses a girl to make his won. Here is where the work begins for the man. To earn his bride to be, the man must demonstrate his virility by being strong enough to carry the woman in his arms from the place of the

dance to a distant spot and back again. Now remember, the girls are covered in stone and glass beads, some have as much as perhaps 50 pounds on them. Imagine putting a 50 pound backpack on your loved one and then picking them up in your arms and carrying them the distance of a football field.

No men stepped forward and the girls all completed their dances and went back to their seats. But as the drums pulsed on, all the women surrounding the dancers erupted into their own dances, and the whole market transformed into a festive tribal dance party. Men, women, and children joined in, dancing away as they encouraged and congratulated each other on their moves. The dance finally came to an end and we were told it was time to go see the Kuno, the High Chief of Odumase, but that is another story.

Later that evening at church a young woman who was my friend came to me with a gift. It was an African Trade Bead bracelet. So God did provide me with a bead souvenir after all, but one so much more special because it came from a local friend. God is good and I am blessed.

March 27th, 2011

It's Africa hot here. We're in a coastal area now, near a lake, so we have a coastal breeze and a lake effect wind. Tomorrow we're heading inland to a rural village, and that will be the real deal Africa heat experience. I will be back in two days and will catch you all up on that experience then.

A most wonderful thing organically popped up today. It was so sweet. I was getting on our minibus to get seated and prepare for the ride back from a town where the traditional beads and bead jewelry is made. That will be the subject of my next post. We were shopping for bead items of all sorts, and at the conclusion of our trip it was time to load up in the van and head back to Tema. As I was sitting on the bus waiting for the others to come, I noticed some little boys playing on some old wooden display cases, almost like a little playground structure. I jumped up with my camera and pounced out of the bus and onto the ground to get shots of the boys playing, down at their level.

As I was ranging, focusing and setting up the exposure, one of the boys noticed me. He told his little friend and they looked over at me, leapt up, and dashed off behind some display cases playing coy. I thought that was cute so I ran around some bead seller booths and headed the boys off. They stopped, and while deciding which way to run, I was able to snap one picture. I pointed at my camera and back at them, winked and smiled. They instantly knew I had gotten the picture. They smiled and giggled and ran off to another box like wooden case of some sort and wiggled their way under it. As they did this I ran around the side to flank them if they popped out again, but the back of the structure was open, so I snapped their picture again. They laughed and smiled and ran out to find more shelter to keep me from getting another picture.

It was a little photo tag game, and we were all having a ball doing it. Then the mothers got involved, they too laughing and trying to coach the children where to run and where to hide. I snapped several more photos of running, hiding and laughing children. This went on for probably five minutes. The pictures are great, and finally they tired of the chase and came out to greet me with smiles and handshakes. They all then posed for me, and I was able to take some wonderful pictures of them.

The Ghanaian people are kind, loving, joyful and fun, and thoroughly enjoy all my encounters with them. I will miss this place and these people when I am gone.

March 26th, 2011

We are here for three things really, as a part of the combined mission outline for Help Is On The Way Ministries. First is spiritual. We finished the Christian revival yesterday, so that concludes the religious portion of our trip. It was 6... days of church, and celebration twice a day, with a wonderful collection of nationals, community and church leaders. It was an unqualified success! We made many friends and we developed wonderful partner contacts to help our mission move forward in July, which is the second mission objective, humanitarian outreach. We do this in many ways, but the primary ways are through a Christian Eye Care Clinic, which sends a team of doctors each year for two weeks to do eye care and surgery, and through building water works projects. They put pumping systems, water storage facilities and water transfer pipelines on existing wells so the wells can be more productive. Finally, they do social care. They offer support for families, education for children and adults, and pastoral development for ministers and church building.

Sunday morning we're off to Tokuroano for the water works and orphanage portion of our mission. I'll try to keep the blogging and the pictures coming. I miss all of you too.

March 25th, 2011

Arriving in Ghana

Following is an excerpt from my Journal: I'm on the flight now to Ghana. I am one of a few white faces in a sea of native Ghanaians. I feel totally comfortable, and everyone is very nice. I am sometimes greeted with wide eyes, but I am always offered a warm, bright smile and a nod. The people are kind, inquisitive, and very polite.

Perhaps it's because I meet everyone with a smile, but the people so far have all been wonderful. All the team members with me are great as well. It's a good mix of young and old, single and married, men and women. They are all happy and joyful people, who love God and the word, and like me, they take joy in exotic life experiences and being of service. Talk of Jesus and the Word comes often, and laughter is continuous. I think I'm going to really enjoy this team.

I am the official chronicle on this trip. I have traded my hammer bags and first aid kit for a camera, laptop, pen and notebook, but my service to the group stays the same.

Ghana Day 2

We arrived at the Accra Airport around 9:30pm local time. Before we even left the airplane one could feel the temperature rise. We could smell the familiar smell of wood and trash burning, typical of poor or rural areas of the third world. As the cabin was opened, the smell of dense, moist vegetation typical to hot and rainy regions came wafting in and mixed with the smoke smell. It produces the ubiquitous olfactory experience of third world tropics. Next we felt the heat and humidity. The 10pm air was very

hot, and the night air flooded the cabin and a wave of humidity crashed over us, instantly causing all to glow with a tropical sweat.

We disembarked from an old style rolling staircase which was brought up from the terminal and maneuvered across the tarmac to the side of the airplane. Because of this, it took much longer to get off the plane, and we all sat in our seats or stood in the aisle waiting for our turn to inch forward towards the dark doorway and into the sweltering night. Everyone shuffled along, each with his or her carryon and usually some special item clutched in their hands. Some carried bottles of liquor bought at the Duty Free, some carried chocolate bought in Amsterdam, and some carried boxes with personal consumer electronics like radios, iPods, laptops and the like. One woman was carrying a huge fish shaped serving platter. It was almost three feet long, and was the shape of a sea fish of some sort, a Sea Bass I suppose. I imagined it was destined for a very nice hotel, or possibly the home of a government official, and there this woman would use it to serve some massive grilled fish to dozens of guests at a fancy dinner. So there she was, a huge red faux Alligator purse in one hand, a giant ornate silver fish platter under her arm, and a black rolling carryon following behind, with one wheel squeaking once with each revolution, squeak, squeak, squeak.

As I came down the gangway I could see a mass of activity all around the plane. The luggage men were driving those squat little baggage trains around, fuel trucks were driving by, security and cleaning staff were walking around watching and preparing the massive 777, and throngs of passengers were herding along through the mêlée, trying to get to the terminal building. It's simply not anything you would ever see in the United States. Passengers were walking between driving security vehicles and gas trucks. Luggage porters were weaving their carts around the crowds. It was carnival like.

Spattered about where security and police officers. They had a watchful eye on the aircraft, and were frisking workers as they boarded the plane to do their jobs. These men were different than security forces in Central America, Nepal, or even India. In all those places I was met with men with guns at the airport, usually large automatic assault rifles. Here, the security officers, who I believe were police, modestly donned only a switch, a thin stick more or less. They had them tucked in their pants, behind their backs.

They were on the ready but very subtle. I did notice some police with just a handgun on their belt, but only handguns.

The thing I noticed most was the lack of confusion and disorder I have found to be standard in airports like the one in Accra. Accra looks third world, but the temperament and behavior is no less organized and cordial than the comings and goings of SFO or LaGuardia. As we entered the terminal there was a huge sign above the door reading "Akuaaba", meaning "Welcome" in a Ghanaian dialect called Twi, a subdialect of Akan, which is one of two major linguistic families. The sign seemed to be cut from plywood or some similar material, and was painted the sharply contrasting blacks, reds, yellows and greens which are the colors of the Ghanaian flag and are synonymous with African Nations. From the style of the cut-out wooden letters, to the jumbled and multicolored stripes across them, the sign was quintessentially African.

Inside the terminal we gathered together and looked on as the various luggage porters worked with our leader, Charles Narh, to coordinate the collection of some 30 suitcases. It went off with surprising ease and efficiency, and soon we had our luggage and had time to start spraying ourselves down with mosquito repellent. The doors of the terminal were mostly open, and hungry flying parasites found their way in to feast on the fresh Human buffet.

We easily rolled through “customs” which was no more than a smiling face in a booth, and strolled out of the airport, across a parking lot, and into the cool air of a climate controlled mini bus.

Akqwaaba to Ghana!

March 24th, 2011

I'm a Photographer?

Because of the lack of quality Internet here, I'll need to backlog some content here for a few days. Those of you who do not already know, I was selected as the designated photographer and videographer for this mission to Ghana. It was thought my eye behind the camera could catch some of the more moving parts of our trip, and draw attention to the challenges we face and the successes we have had, such that you at home might be drawn into this cause and be moved to assist. Back in the day, I did own digital cameras and used them very, very frequently to record the craziness we called “life” at the time. While I was familiar with my cameras, each camera is quite different and needs to be courted if you're to get any good material out of it. With that said, this is the story of the Friday I departed for Ghana.

I was to take off from SFO at 4:50pm. I was to meet the team at 12:30 at SFO. The team leader, Charles Narh had ordered the new camera for this trip in advance, and had requested express, over night shipping. Well, long story short, the warehouse didn't have all the goods we ordered, so they sat on the camera for a week waiting for the stuff to come in. And then when they did send the package, they sent it priority ground. So there I am, tracking a package, at home, in San Jose, at 10am on Friday morning. Ouch!

After much deliberation, and finally running out of time, I decide to call FedEx and get the location of the truck, and drive myself to the truck and get the package. No need they said, the package is right around the corner and the truck is on his way. Two hours later it still wasn't there, and my zero hour was fast approaching. I decided I would go crazy if I stayed in the house any longer so I decided to go fill up and get some last minute stuff for the trip. Coming out of CVS I passed a truck with its lights on, and a man standing near the front of the truck. He said it was his truck, but he couldn't get it open because the keys were in the truck. I asked, “Would you like me to pop them out for you”? He beamed and said “You can do that”? I responded with a confident “yes” and sent him down the strip mall to the drycleaners to get a hanger. He returned with the hanger, and I popped the door open, and got his keys, saved his battery, and got him back on the road to catch his own flight to Hong Kong, no kidding. He thanked me profusely and insisted that I take his number and call the next time I'm in Hong Kong. How great is that! I guess it's worth addressing this nagging question now. Yes, I know how to get into cars.

Just assume I'm an avid reader and my favorite material is historically accurate, fact-based crime novels. :-) So, you know, I never once thought about my camera box, my flight, or any troubles while I was there in that parking lot, in the cold and rain, breaking into a car while in service to another person in need. It was a wonderful lesson to learn again. By getting out of myself, and into someone else, I can be free of my troubles, and have the joy of relieving someone else of theirs as well.

When I got home the package was there. I jumped in my car, went to my mother's for a ride to the airport, and made it to the flight just on time. There is design in EVERYTHING, and I love to find it in life as I walk the only path I can clearly see today, and that is helping the world and the people in it, relieving one challenge at a time, as best I can.

I took time to learn the camera on the 16 hours of flights, so now we are getting along famously, and I hope you find the content coming out of Ghana both moving and captivating.

March 23rd, 2011

Today we had the opportunity to be interviewed on the local radio station, the largest in Ghana. Several members of our team sat down in a sound booth and went through a lively interview about our mission here and the service we seek to give to the people of Ghana. We hope this message sent out all over Ghana will serve to help our organization take off.

March 22nd, 2011

Hello friends and family. We made it to Ghana and all is well. We are enjoying a nice lunch after two church services this morning. We are all well and have good accommodations at the kesdem hotel in Tema, Ghana.

March 20th, 2011

So the flights to Amsterdam and then into Ghana were great. Compared to India, it was like flying to LA for the day. :-) When we hit Ghana and they opened the doors to let in the 10pm air, it was very hot, and the humidity flooded the cabin and crashed over us, instantly making us all glow with a tropical sweat. I have more to report tomorrow when I have a few hours to post content.

All is going well here in Ghana. We are all settled in and have Internet finally, so I will be posting more soon. I have incredible pictures to share and will get them up by tomorrow. We have been to church twice each day and we've been to an orphanage, playing with the children and bringing them some goods they need. Just know we are all safe and doing good things here.

March 19th, 2011

Hey All!!! We're now in Amsterdam, safe and sound. A cup of coffee here is almost \$6, so be aware of that if you're swinging through. :-) Our team is together, happy, excited, and ready for our next leg to Ghana. No pictures yet, but I have many and will update when we get to real connectivity. Peace and God Bless.

March 18th, 2011

With some serious challenges, I did in fact make the flight! We're on our way to Amsterdam. God bless and much love.

March 17th, 2011

We're sleeping outside 2 nights in Ghana, so I need to bring a personal mosquito net for my sleeping mat. Found a great one at REI. I just received my passport back from the Ghanaian Embassy. It's in hand and stamped with the entrance visa. Shipping out in 24 hours!!!

March 12th, 2011

Hey Friends. Only 5 days not until Team Ghana departs. We had a commissioning ceremony Sunday, were blessed and anointed –with oil—by the pasture, and stood in front of the whole congregation which prayed over us. It was a beautiful and powerful experience. We raised more money for the orphanage as well. Incredible! God is good and I am ready to serve.

January 4th, 2011

I am going to Ghana as a member of Help Is On The Way Ministreis (HIOTWM). They want to change the horrible circumstances third-world people face trying to keep clean drinking water in their diets. While there I will witness and document the commissioning and handing over of the 1st Phase of HIOTWM's 2nd water project in Lipke-Abrani. I will also visit HIOTWM's first water project (Tokuroano Wate Project) completed last year, to learn how it has positively affected the lives of the villagers.

At the end of that portion of the trip I am going to the children's home Marfo Chiledren Care Foundation (MFCC) to assist them with building beds/furniture, locating and buying a van for transporting the children to and from school and doctor appointments, and helping with first aid and teaching English. It's a full trip no doubt, but the many trips before this have gifted me with a passion for this work and stamina for the completion of projects.

This trip is expensive. My shots alone will be \$500. Airfare is \$1,700. The trip is \$1,600 more for construction supplies, transportation and supplies for the children. There are more costs in the visa for entry and my personal needs. It will likely be every bit of \$4,000 for me to serve on this trip.

I can come up with a lot of that number, but not all of it. That's where you come in. It's my hope you will want to donate your money, so I can donate my time. It's my hope you will want to serve these causes as I do. As a team, we can contribute to our capabilities and get these people the love and relief they need.