

Andrew Johnson

Ghana

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It has been one crazy week! I want to thank all of you for your prayers and also explain in greater detail all that has happened and how what has happened came to be. As was mentioned in the previous email this week, this has caught virtually everyone by surprise, myself included. Therefore, I will start at the beginning!!

In February and March of 2020, I had begun making plans with ABWE's West Africa Regional Director Jason Laird, my Ghana teammate Joseph Gelatt, and pre-field director Brad Winkler about summer plans since my short-term year in Ghana was coming to a close. Originally, the hope was to leave Ghana in May for one month to attend my Mom's wedding in Nebraska and then return to Ghana in June for two months to accommodate the Gelatt's return to the field and complete the annual inspection due on the C-206 residing in Togo at the Baptist Bible Hospital in Tsiko. That would have placed my official return from Ghana in August of 2020. Because they were still months away, none of the plans had been officially verified and dates hadn't really been decided. However, none of those plans had included the COVID-19 crisis that was only beginning to emerge globally in February. Once it was clear that the global affect of COVID-19 was going to be significant, I had originally decided to go ahead and stay in Ghana since I had been planning to return in May anyway. Once that decision had been made, as all of you well know, the changes kept coming quickly and suddenly on a global scale. Everyday, new information and policies affecting Ghana, the US, and my neighboring ABWE missionaries in Togo came down the pike. In a flurry of quick decisions involving primarily the regional director and myself, although there were a few other voices involved, Jason and I decided it would be good for me to try to come home. As soon as the decision was made, the borders were closed in Ghana and Togo. No one allowed in or out all land, sea, and air borders.

At this point, it looked like I wouldn't make it out of Ghana until the crisis was over. That meant an undefined amount of time in Ghana with no access to the Togo south team, all the while, the BATA Bible Campus ministries had all been suspended, and all church services with Grace Baptist Church also suspended. The suspended activity, the isolation factor, and the indefinite time in country, had all the makings of a bleak 4 or 5 months of interesting undefined ministry and life. With the changes coming so quickly and the future so undefined, I decided to go ahead and contact the US embassy to see if they were working on any flights for US citizens. It turned out they had already negotiated one repatriation flight with the Ghana government and were working on a second. By the time I completed the application for the embassy, I was too late to make the second flight and the notice that came from the embassy said that they were not working on any future flights for US Citizens. However, they also said to stay ready since, if one was negotiated, it would happen quickly on short notice.

I packed my bags and got ready to leave. I started working on extra paperwork for the Bible Campus and getting Grace ready for me to go. All of this happened with me assuming that I would not be coming to the US on a US embassy negotiated repatriation flight. For this reason, I didn't notify any of you on the possibility of me leaving.

About 3 weeks later, it was Holy Week. Palm Sunday came and the workers and I focused on the narrative given in the scripture of that week in our Monday morning Bible Study. A few days later, on Thursday, I received an email from the US embassy telling me they were working on getting one last repatriation flight negotiated for the following week. The email made clear that they were not guaranteeing anything, and that I shouldn't assume that the flight would even happen. On the same day, I was asked to speak at a special Easter service that Grace was going to try to hold on Sunday about 45 minutes away from Ho in Tsiomekope, a remote village out in the bush.

Easter Sunday came and about 15 people piled into the 12 passenger van that I was driving. We made it out to Tsiomekope and had a memorable Easter celebration as the body of Christ. It was truly an encouraging and uplifting time of singing, prayer, and encouragement from God's word. We all ate together afterwards and piled back in the van for a return trip. At this time, no one was expecting me to be on a plane Wednesday bound for the US, myself included. Monday came and with it a phone call from the embassy verifying my information and asking me if I wanted to be on the flight should one be negotiated. I was reminded again that there was no actual flight yet, and the embassy itself didn't know if they could get a flight either.

Tuesday, about 11 AM I was notified that a flight had indeed been negotiated and that I should be at the airport in Accra 6 AM Wednesday morning. I had 15 hours to get everything in order (the trip to the capitol would take 4 hours). By God's grace, I was able to complete everything by late evening, and had one last meeting with all the workers and students at BATA. I finished packing the rest of the night, and got to rest for about 3 hours before getting up at 2 AM to begin my trip to the Accra airport.

The rest is history! I flew to Washington, then to Denver, and was picked up by family at DIA. I am currently in Nebraska starting my suggested two week quarantine. At this time, I am still hoping to return in June or July as originally planned to work on the plane and work briefly with the Gelatts. Of course, these plans will all depend on any international travel restrictions.

Thank you so much for praying for me during this time!! I hope that this email clears up questions and concerns. As always, please feel free to reply with any questions you may have!

For God's ever increasing GLORY!

Andrew Johnson