Dear Friends,

Greetings from my family in Ghana and from friends you have prayed for and supported all over Africa!

When I received the call to join in the ministry of sustainable agriculture of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in January of 2001, little did I know how much God will use me as His instrument to bring joy and relief to several destitute families in Africa.

Today, I can joyfully report that, through your prayers, kind and generous givings and donations, several thousands of lives have been touched directly and indirectly in the continent of Africa where this ministry has a presence. God richly bless you as you continue to give.

Even though I was commissioned as your Missionary only in 2005, I had served earlier from 2001 as the Coordinator of the current Sustainable Agriculture & Development program of UMCOR. My first visit was to Liberia in February of 2001, where I met with farmers and staff of the Liberia Annual Conference and together we designed and developed the current program based on principles of sustainability. We sought to ensure the program was relatively cheap and affordable, environmentally friendly, socially just and acceptable to communities. We sought also to avoid high inputs that were dependent on donations from abroad.

The ministry in sustainable agriculture- commencement and progress in Africa

Liberia has been a pace setting country for most of the programs of my ministry. Farmers in Neigbein, Gahan and Pledeye, near Ganta in the Nimba Country were previously seriously confronted with issues of upsurging levels of pests and diseases on their crops. They depended on chemical pesticides which were often very expensive and unaffordable. Also because of the high levels of illiteracy, these chemical pesticides were misused with devastating consequences on the health of the farmers. The situation was found to be same in Sierra Leone and Ghana. The situation has been reversed in these countries as farmers have received training through UMCOR’s program in Integrated Pest Management. Farmers now make informed choices and produce healthy crops at affordable costs.

My ministry was the first ever to introduce modern beekeeping in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This was in 2003. We have since done successful trainings also in Ghana, Mozambique and most recently in Zimbabwe. Farmers in those countries previously harvested honey in the wild, producing unhygienic honey and degrading the environment. The improvement in Nutrition has been a major hallmark of my ministry. In most communities where we have served, malnutrition has reduced from very high levels of 80% of children and women to levels of less than 5% in a decade of dedicated commitment to bringing about positive change in the lives of the people.

November, 2013
Summary of some achievements and high points of the ministry in sustainable agriculture

Approximately 10,000 farmers (60% women) have received direct training in sustainable agriculture practices over the last 10 years of my ministry. Over 90% of these farmers have sustained the practices learned. Each of these farmers have taught at least 10 other families in their locations.

Mrs. Younger Gant of Barnesville, Montserrado County of Liberia was a very poor woman who earned less than $1 a day prior to her participation in the UMCOR-led IPM training in 2005. Just a season after her training, she utilized the knowledge gained in the 16-week training and produced vegetables with little amount of pesticides and organic fertilizers. Her productivity was very high. She continued season by season and in less than 5 years she had earned enough income to build a new home where her family has moved into. They all previously lived in one room.

Solomon Kodua, Nana Yaw, Margaret Oduro, are enthusiastic and hardworking but resource poor farmers of the village of Jeduako in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Since UMCOR started working with these farmers in 2001, their lives have never been the same. There has been a complete transformation in the village of Jeduako. Farmers who hitherto could farm only 0.5 acre of land currently have about 6 acres. They were supported also by UMCOR with a small revolving loan and these have helped them to be food secure. They have reiterated that in spite of the rising cost of living and hikes in world food prices, the community of Jeduako does not lack in diversified food and their nutrition has been boosted by the consumption of Moringa, which they cultivate having learned this from UMCOR trainings.

The entire village of Neingbein in the Nimba County of Liberia has been transformed nutritionally. Malnutrition among women and children was extremely high (about 90%) prior to UMCOR’s training in nutrition using Moringa in 2003. Currently each of more than 250 households in Neingbein has at least 3 Moringa trees and each family eats Moringa in one form or the other daily. There are no instances of reported cases of malnutrition in Neingbein currently.

Very recently UMCOR has made similar strides in Malawi and Zimbabwe and very soon there will be very similar reports of improvements in livelihoods in those countries. My ministry is making remarkable impact in people’s lives.
Further prospects for transformation and challenges

There have been life transformation experiences since 2004 for several thousands of families also in the Katanga Region of South Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo with UMCOR’s training in sustainable agriculture. Several hundreds of farmers have benefitted directly from UMCOR’s training in Integrated Pest Management in that region. Those experiences have been heard by several communities who are also requesting for such support. Recently, UMCOR has begun working with farmers in the very deprived Kasungami area about 5 miles from urban Lubumbashi in DRC. It has however become imperative for UMCOR to demonstrate not only the empirical and historical evidences of transformation in the lives of the beneficiaries but also to show scientific proof of effectiveness of programs

Moringa holds great promise as a nutrition supplement of choice and despite all the research results and analysis of nutrition in Moringa, Government departments in Africa still request for detailed in-country trials on Moringa to validate results already available in literature. UMCOR is therefore faced with the challenge to conduct such trials in virtually all countries where my ministry has a presence in order to satisfy the requirements of the requisite Government departments of the respective countries. UMCOR may need to seek support from elsewhere for these trials.

The John Hopkins University Medical School in Baltimore, MD is one Institution that has done extensive work on the validation of the nutrition in Moringa and could therefore be contacted for collaboration in the conduct of the trials in the respective countries. Moringa has an enormous potential for improving human health. It contains 46 natural antioxidants and several phytonutrients and helps maintain ones immunity and reduces the ageing process. Exploring the current knowledge on Moringa and its various uses will literally save millions of lives. It is imperative on my mission to continue to promote the uses of Moringa in spite of the challenge posed by the respective Government authorities in requesting for validation of the qualities and potential of Moringa as a nutrition supplement of choice

The water purification properties in Moringa also require further trials by the water treatment authority of each country and this is a task that requires some good amount of resources and commitment.

Beekeeping as practiced in Africa and in the UMCOR training program also requires further testing. The Kenya Top Bar hives used and the solar extraction methods differ substantially from the European and American type beekeeping where Langstroth hives and centrifugal extraction methods are utilized. The quality of honey as extracted from the UMCOR taught systems compares very favorably with any quality honey extracted in the US. However the nutrition of the honey still requires testing to ensure that solar extracted honey is still rich in nutrients.
Pray for me

I am due to travel to Sudan on Friday, November 15 for a month to conduct training in nutrition in the Darfur Region. Sudan is a very conservative Moslem country where there is great intolerance for Christianity. I have been advised to keep away any Christian literature from my luggage for fear of expulsion. There is also much fear of Sudan of extremism though I am looking forward for some good training where I hope to impart skills in training on nutrition to participants comprising of staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and also local leadership of the community of El Daein in East Darfur.

I require prayers also for travel mercies. As 2013 ends, I request for prayers for a good year of 2014. We pray for our covenant relationships and that it gets even strengthened the more.

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