



For We Are God's Helpers

2023 Annual Newsletter

Share your gifts, live your faith, change the world ... and let the world change you.

Running Water

Karen Hunka writes from Damongo, Ghana, "This morning as I was driving to the village to audit the local Catholic Church, I saw women and children on the side of the road using the water that was gathered to wash pots, clothes and their children... Not everyone in my village has access to running water. The Catholic Diocese has financed many boreholes for the local communities but they can't supply water to everyone."

And yet the ones that have been dug out make a world of difference in a country where only 62% of population has access to clean drinking water and where 50% of Typhoid fever is contracted by children under the age of 15 due to the lack of access to clean, fresh water. Moreover, in Ghana, one person out of every ten has to spend more than 30 minutes to access a source of drinking water, which for Damongo is even more (UNICEF).

Thank God the Church is there to help! And thank God so are you! Your support of our team of missionaries in Damongo helps the diocese fund many projects, including the drilling of boreholes for water wells.

Karen Hunka's audits of parishes and Josie Cruz's audits of other institutions as well as the systems of checks and balances that they created and supervise combined with the creation of professional financial reports enhance the transparency for the diocese. This improved transparency and accountability in turn help the diocese when it seeks financing from the Pontifical Mission Societies in Rome. Transparency, accountability and anti-fraud systems are essential to be eligible to apply for such funds. These funds are the lifeline for the diocese and its parishes, seminaries,



Women in Ghana collect water from puddles. The Diocese of Damongo finances boreholes to supply clean water.

clinics and other projects. In spite of the many challenges stemming from the lack of proper resources (i.e. computers and accounting software), Josie and Karen are able to identify accounting inadequacies and weaknesses and recommend changes which the diocesan institutions implement. Even though sometimes their work is tedious and overwhelming, like when Josie had to re-sequence and re-number all the payment vouchers and receipts from the diocesan headquarters, the Unity Center and other institutions to correct certain accounting weaknesses and errors, it is all worth the effort.

As a mission diocese (only 14% of local population is Catholic), Damongo is extensively (cont. on page 2)

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relying on the funds from Rome; however, it also makes every effort to generate its own revenue. Here we help also. Mark McGraw's management of the sole income producing entity in the diocese, the Unity Centre, helps generate funds to support the water boreholes and many other projects. Mark reports, "sales have been inching upward. That means increased needed revenue for the Church to continue its important mission here."

UNICEF-commissioned studies have shown that there is a strong link between poverty and collection time for water. Poor people spend much time collecting water - energy that could be spent on education and business endeavors. Consequently, by financing the water boreholes and making water accessible to communities, the Church not only provides water but also frees time for women to work and for children to study since they are predominantly tasked with collecting water. Thus, your support of our team in Ghana not only helps the diocese with water boreholes but also allows children to go to school and women to engage in other activities that can help their families.

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward" (Matt. 10:42).



By financing water boreholes like the one pictured above (top right), the Church in Damongo frees time for women to work (middle right). Lay Mission-Helper Mark McGraw manages the Unity Centre (bottom right) that helps provide funds to support the boreholes. Lay missionaries Karen Hunka (top left) and Josie Cruz (bottom left) audit the parishes and other institutions, create professional financial reports and enhance the transparency of the Diocese.

Time to Say “Goodbye”

Six years ago, I sat down at the computer to begin my search for a job. As I sat there, however, I sensed in my heart that the Holy Spirit wanted that I do something else. He was calling me to mission. My search had now gone from an accounting position to finding a Catholic mission organization that accepted someone as old as myself. I was soon to turn sixty. Lay Mission-Helpers Association popped up almost immediately. Before I knew it, I was flying to Ghana.

My first three years I worked as an accounting clerk at the Secretariat. I was a “Paper and Pencil” accounting clerk. When my three-year commitment ended, I stayed for a fourth year, then a fifth. The last two years have been most rewarding. I work as the Bursar at St. Anne’s Girls’ Catholic Senior High School. I am the accountant, the supervisor of the laborers and cooks, and help manage the farm. The school has over 300 acres and with the price of food increasing it was decided that we would grow maize, beans, peanuts, and casava. I am blessed to be able to interact with the girls and to be known on campus as “Granny Karen.”

I was given the task of auditing the diocese’s 13 parishes, along with a minor seminary and a technical school. I did the initial audits in 2022 and just completed the second round of audits in October 2023. I reviewed the practices and procedures to ensure best practices were in place that safeguard parish funds while ensuring transparency and accountability. Most importantly for me, however, was the fact that it gave me the opportunity to see all the different parish communities and to meet many parishioners.

My three-year commitment with Lay Mission-



Karen Hunka is finishing her five years of service in Ghana.

Helpers has turned into the most amazing five years imaginable. I learned how to live with less. Less electricity, less water, less comfort. I learned to live a simpler life. I learned to be selfless and put others before myself. I learned about different cultures and traditions. Some believe mission life is a “sacrifice”. I do not see it as a sacrifice at all but rather a blessing.

Just as the Holy Spirit was instrumental in my going to mission, He has helped me realize that it is time to return to the USA. I will be going back to what for most of my life was home, but in my heart, Damongo will also be thought of as home.

Commissioning 2023

Join us for the Commissioning Ceremony of missionaries at St. John the Evangelist Church (6028 S. Victoria Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90043) on Sunday, December 10th at 10:00 AM. Nancy Magloire, Ed. D. will be commissioned for Uganda, Thomas Guyer for Ghana, and Maria Luisa Garcia for Peru. They will be sent to their assignments in January. We count on your prayers and continued financial support as we share our gifts and witness our faith in mission communities.



New Mission in Peruvian Jungle

Located in northern Peru, the Apostolic Vicariate San Jose del Amazonas covers the territory the size of the state of Illinois and is populated by 160,000 inhabitants. Bishop Jose Javier Travieso Martin invited us to help with the administration and development of the vicariate that serves 680 villages. These communities are accessible only by boats and struggle with the shortage of culturally competent pastoral ministers, extreme poverty, migrations, human trafficking, family violence, low quality education, and many other problems.

Anna Borkowska, the right hand of the bishop pleads, "we need missionaries not only for 'the first line of duty,' who visit the villages and take the gospel directly to the people, but in this moment, we need you to help us in the 'back office'. It is where we provide resources so those in the front line can do their job. Both are equally important and the mission cannot be fulfilled without either one of them."

We are responding to this request by sending to Peru our missionary Maria Luisa Garcia who served in Papua New Guinea before COVID. Maria is scheduled to start her three-year assignment in January.

Maria's work on developing human and financial resources for the vicariate will free the bishop, all his 10 priests, 38 religious' women, and 10 lay missionaries to focus on pastoral, educational, social and sacramental ministries. It is indeed a frontier mission territory that is completely dependent on missionaries. We are eager to embrace the challenge because we know we can count on your help and support. Please keep Maria and all the people in San Jose de Amazonas in your prayers!



Starting in 2024, Lay Mission-Helpers will begin ministering to the people of the Apostolic Vicariate San Jose de Amazonas.