



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

WIAGA, GHANA

VISIT TO OUR ST. JOSEPH
SISTER PARISH, MAY 2023



Ghana is in West Africa with 33M people in about the land size of Utah. It gained independence from Britain in 1957. English is the official language with 80+ local languages. 71% of people are Christian, but only 14% are Catholic.



Wiaga is a small town in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It is reachable via dirt roads which are poorly maintained. The nearest airport is in Tamale, 135 miles and 4 hours away. The parish is within the diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga.

Most people in the area are subsistence farmers or traders. Many people live in homes made of mud or basic cement blocks with an aluminum roof, many without indoor plumbing or electricity.





St. Francis Xavier Catholic Parish in Wiaga has a main church, parish hall, rectory, an outdoor Virgin Mary grotto, and primary school. It is next to the community clinic, St. Lucas Hospital.

Fr. George Asigre
Parish priest



Fr. Edward Abugri
Curate (assistant)



Upgraded main church

Contributions from St. Joseph helped fund the new church ceiling and fans.

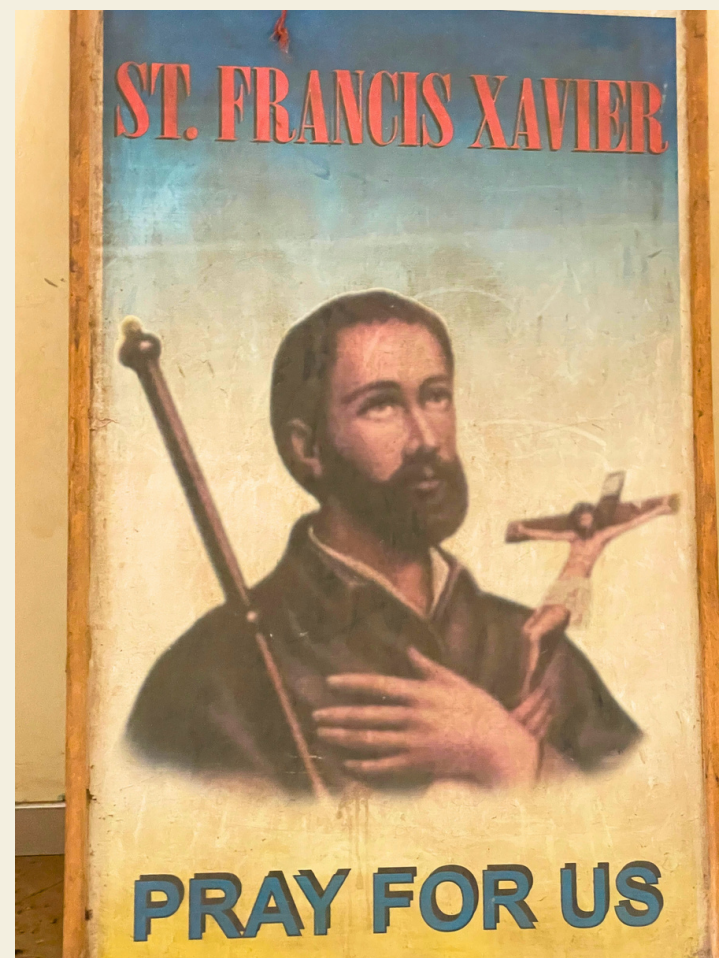


Installation of a wood ceiling under the metal roof plus fans make parishoners more comfortable in the heat.



The upgrade of the main church included installing real windows vs wall air openings.





The tabernacle and artwork of the parish patron saint.

OUTSTATION CHURCHES

The parish has 4,000 people distributed over a rural area of 5 to 20 km from Wiaga. Few people have transportation, even a bicycle, to travel to the main Wiaga church.

One priest says Masses in main church and one travels to 2 outstations per Sunday. Each outstation has Mass with the priest once/month.





Church at Kadema (also called Bayagsa)

**When a priest is not
available, a Eucharistic
minister conducts a service.**



Church at Gbedesma



Church at Chansa



After 3 years, the church remained only partially complete. Weekly collections at this outstation are about \$1.

No roof, walls and floor are not yet finished.

Yet, local parishioners "bring their own chair" (if they have one) and the Mass is held in this space under the hot sun.



Church at Zamsa

A school building is used as a gathering place for Mass.





Church at Abuluk

An open school classroom building is used as a gathering place for Mass.



Parish Life

Welcome dance for us as guests from St. Joseph.



Parish Hall

**Mass was held in parish hall temporarily
due to the main church upgrade.**



Celebration of Mass

Very joyful music with full body rhythm! They pray for St. Joseph during Prayers of the Faithful every week.



Fr. George Asigre presiding at Mass and blessing a bicycle after Mass.





A Sunday collection from all the outstations is about \$10 total and \$50 USD from the main parish Church. People offer physical goods to share with the rectory or for distribution to those in need, e.g., eggs, bread, fruit, etc.

Weekly Sunday Word of God celebrated with the children and catechumen. Here they learn to pray, sing and be guided by the Word of God.



Very hot days are not only uncomfortable for parishioners (and especially visitors from US), they can warp the Easter candle!





**Praying the rosary daily in
the beautiful grotto area
during May and October.**



**The people are full of joy, gratitude,
generosity, and faith!**



**The people
at Chansa
outstation
gave us two
guinea fowl
and sang
songs for us
during our
visit!**

Several parish groups, including the Christian Mothers, performed dances for us!



The parishoners made us feel so welcome!





The children had lots of questions for us and wanted to spend time with us.



**The young to the old all
shared their love with us.**



**The parish made us special clothing as a gift.
The Christian Mothers are very active in the parish.**



The parish cannot afford a salary for the priests, only a small living allowance. Victoria teaches full time, but prepares delicious meals for the priests (and visitors) every day as a volunteer.



BUILSA CHIEF

The Chief is the leader of the local Builsa tribe. He lives in Wiaga in a compound with about 150 extended family members.

The Chief resolves disputes and minor crimes in the community including a case of broken windows in the Church.



The Chief of Wiaga, one of the few Catholic chiefs in the Builsa land. He is the leader of Wiaga traditional council and land.

Bishop Agyenta Academy



The parish operates a co-ed primary school for grades K - 8.

**Donations from St. Joseph enabled the parish
to finish the school building.**



Fr. Edward, principal of the school, spoke to the students with us. They told us what they learned that day and asked us questions.



The children have no access to computers and have to share books. They were exceptionally polite and well behaved during our visit.



The classrooms are very basic and some are in need of repair (floor below).





The school classrooms have a metal roof and are not air conditioned. There are no ceiling fans.



A teacher carries her baby during the day while teaching.

We visited on a 103F day with 85+% RH. The heat stress was very difficult for us, leading to one episode of dehydration and dizziness.

Let's build community together!

