

Introducing: The Richard Ormsby Junior and Senior Secondary School, part of OC Ministries in Baiwalla, Sierra Leone



Pastor Judith Banyia, the Director of the Baiwalla Ministry, addressing the student body at The Richard Ormsby Junior and Senior Secondary School

How did the Baiwalla Ministry get started?

- Judith Banyia fled to the USA in 1995 to escape from the civil war in Sierra Leone. While living in the USA, she went to seminary, became a United Methodist Minister and served several Minnesota churches. She encouraged the churches she served to provide support to her people back in Sierra Leone.
- In 2013, Pastor Judith returned to her native town of Baiwalla to start a ministry, with the ultimate goal of starting a secondary school. The churches that supported Pastor Judith's ministry when she lived in the USA continued to support her when she moved back to Baiwalla. Rev. Rick Ormsby, a retired District Superintendent in Minnesota, took over coordinating the fundraising to support Pastor Judith's ministry when she returned to Sierra Leone.
- Before Pastor Judith went back to Sierra Leone, Pastor Rick introduced Pastor Judith to the OC Ministries Board and asked them to take over the management of the funding for the Baiwalla Ministry while he continued his fundraising efforts.
- Since 2013 when Judith returned to Baiwalla, she has started the following programs: a church with 125 people attending; 2 satellite churches; an adult literacy program; installed several wells; installed; built a mission house to house visitors; installed solar panels on the house; launched a school feeding program for the local elementary school children; and provided resources to an impoverished community such as food, clothing and medicine.

- In 2016, a generous donor provided the funding to OC Ministries to build a secondary school in Sierra Leone. It was completed over 3 years using local labor, local materials and no machines.
- The Baiwalla Ministry purchased 25 acres of land to establish a farm that could bring in income to support the school and raise vegetables to feed the students. In 2020, a general store was built to train students in running a small business and bring in income to support the school.
- Various church groups have taken mission trips to Baiwalla, have seen the various ministries in action and have come home to “spread the word” encouraging local churches to provide support.



Students eating lunch in their classroom. (Ormsby School is one of the few secondary schools serving a meal.)

What are the plans for the development of the Richard Ormsby School?

- The Richard Ormsby Secondary School opened its doors in September 2019 with 120 students enrolled in the 7th and 8th grades. The school is designed to become a “model school” meaning that it utilizes the latest teaching methods and provides a rich learning environment for students. It has well qualified teachers, is equipped with ample teaching/learning materials, a computer lab equipped with 30 computers and an intranet loaded with electronic resources. It also has a well stocked library, and a farm and store for students to learn vocational skills. Each student has his/her own text books in every subject (a resource not provided in other schools).

- A meal is served each day so that the students can focus on learning rather than hunger.
- The plan is to open the school over 5 years in phases with the goal of enrolling a maximum of 600 students. The current school year, 2021-22 is the third year of operation. There are 330 students enrolled from 4th through 9th grades. Currently there are 12 teachers and 1 Principal all who have teaching certificates and are licensed to teach by the Sierra Leonian government.
- The school structure, qualifications of the staff and curriculum have been developed to be accepted as a Government Approved School. This enables the school to be available to receive funds to support teachers' salaries and a subsidy for school operations. (The Sierra Leonian educational ministry is significantly short of funds to support the country's schools so only 3 teachers' salaries have been subsidized by the educational ministry.)
- Currently, a generator provides electricity for the school. Plans are in the works to develop solar power to electrify the school.



- Several small businesses are under development to support the school: a farm, a general store and a rice hulling service. The OC Ministries Boards hopes that in time the Baiwalla Ministry will be largely self-supporting.

How is the Ormsby School funded?

- The Baiwalla Ministry is partially funded through OC Ministries, the international outreach arm of The United Methodist Church of Minnesota. OC Ministries, along with affiliate churches, has been supporting ministries in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Haiti and Jamaica for 32 years.
- Minnesota Churches have donated money and goods over the years to support the Baiwalla Ministry. But with the construction of the school and it's need for support, the Baiwalla Ministry has grown so large that OC Ministries needs a consortium of churches and individuals, each committed to supporting a part of the school.
- In addition to support from individuals and churches through OC Ministries, the Baiwalla Ministry is committed to developing support for itself through the profits from small businesses, and subsidies from the Sierra Leonian Ministry of Education and the Sierra Leonian Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.



How can you or your church support the Richard Ormsby School?

- OC Ministries needs to have a consistent, reliable funding base to support the school. You or your church can support one or more of the operating expenses of the school such as pay for teachers' salaries, contribute to funding school lunches, do a drive to support students' school fees.
- Your church can ship needed resources such as library books, food from "Feed my Starving Children", laptop computers for each teacher and printers for the school.
- You can fund a one time school development expense such as furniture for a new classroom, furnishings for a home economics lab or a science lab.
- You can take a **mission trip** to learn about the school and culture, contribute to a needed project, or share your expertise about issues related to the school and business development.
- After your trip, you can become an Ambassador for the Baiwalla Ministry by encouraging other individuals and churches to support the ministry



The school feeding team preparing school lunches for 330 kids over an open fire

What is the nature of the Baiwalla Community?

- Baiwalla is the Capitol of the Dea Chiefdom, with a population of 9876 people. The school draws children from 5 outlying smaller towns. The average income is

approximately \$2.00 per day or \$730 per year. The Dea Chiefdom is one of the most impoverished regions of Sierra Leone.

- The literacy rate among adults in Sierra Leone is 43.21%. Despite the low literacy rate of adults, families are eager for their children to get a good education because they know that if their children have more skills, they will have a more prosperous future and can contribute to the development of their community and country.
- Most people who live in Baiwalla are subsistence farmers. They work their land entirely by hand. There are no machines nor animals to help with the farm work.
- Another typical job is petty trading. This involves an individual selling a product, such as soap, prepared foods or vegetables raised on their land in the local farmers' market.

Are you Interested in learning more?

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