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 The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
 Bethel Synods Coordination Office

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Western Wollega Bethel Synod
 Illubabor Bethel Synod
 South West Bethel Synod

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Eastern Gambela Bethel Presbytery
 Western Gambela Bethel Presbytery
 Presbyterian Church (USA)

Members of the Ethiopian Mission Network
 2010 Meeting in PA
 U.S.A.

* TC 88318-1/10
 Ref. No. March 5/10
 *? Date

Grace and peace to you from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are so blessed to be partners with you for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. The companion relationship offers us the privilege of participating in the life of another church through prayer, study, communication, and exchange of people and resources.

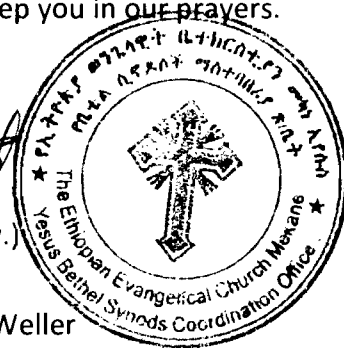
We have experienced such a wonderful partnership for years now, and have gained a lot from our common ventures in which the Most High God is being glorified and many thousands have benefitted. We, therefore, thank you so much for all the assistances you provided with to BSCO and all five EECMY-Bethel Synods. It is our prayer and wish that this partnership in God's Mission continues for ever.

Last but not least, we request our beloved co-worker, country representative of PC-USA and brother in Christ, Rev. Michael S. Weller to bring our (BSCO, SWBS, WWBS, EGBS, WGBS, IBS) heartfelt greetings to you and present the up-dates on the current situation of BSCO and the Five EECMY-Bethel Synods.

On behalf of BSCO staff, BMYS, and Five EECMY-Bethel Synods, I wish you a very successful meeting. We will keep you in our prayers.

With regards,
 Sincerely yours,

Teferi Berkessa (Rev.)
 BSCO Coordinator
 Cc: Rev. Michahel S. Weller



UP-DATES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION
OF BSCO
AND THE FIVE EECMY-BETHEL SYNODS

(To be presented to the Ethiopian Mission Network Meeting in PA, U.S.A.)

" ... those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength." (Is. 40:31 NIV)

I. Introduction

There has been no time that a faithful church of Christ lived without any challenge in this world, particularly, in the Land, once known as, **"The Island of Christianity."**

It is only by the grace, providence, and protection of the Almighty God that the Church continues to proclaim the saving message of the Lord to the diversified groups of people in Ethiopia.

In spite of this, there were times that the servants of the Lord lose hope and grew tired, but *"the Creator of the ends of earth who will not grow tired or weary gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak."* (Is. 40:29)

Thus, we trust in the LORD and with the renewed strength we continue to serve God's people that live in the west and southwestern part of Ethiopia.

The services we render to those diversified groups of people are to meet both spiritual and physical needs of a person.

Through those services, hundreds and thousands of people have received the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Savior, and many thousands have benefitted from development and social services delivered to them.

The active and continual participation of our partners in the PC-USA and, now, ELCA has made it possible for us to render multi-faceted services to the people of Ethiopia. We are so grateful for their generosity in making funds & materials available for various projects and programs, and also for paying short visits to the synods, and praying for the holistic ministry of the synods. As partners, we want to assure you that, we do also pray for you and share your joys and concerns in many ways.

II. BETHEL SYNODS COORDINATION OFFICE (BSCO)

The Bethel Synods Coordination Office continues to serve the five EECMY-Bethel Synods, receive & accommodate partners from abroad and facilitate inland travels to and from Synods, etc.

2.1 Personnel

Currently, BSCO has 17 employees, including upper and lower guest house workers and guards. Rev. Teferi Berkessa is the Coordinator of the office.

Starting September 2009, BSCO has got a new person, who works as a Program Coordinator. This position was created some years back, but was vacant. Now, the former organizer, developer, DASSC Director, and President of the South West Bethel Synod (SWBS) is assigned to. Ato Petros Tsanu is coordinating various programs launched through BSCO in the five EECMY-Bethel Synods (IBS, SWBS, EGBS, WGBS, and WWBS).

BSCO is so blessed and very happy to have Ato Petros, who has a very rich experience in management, development and evangelism work. Please pray for him, his work, and his family to join him in the near future.

We, all the workers of BSCO are always at your service, and want to learn more from you as to how to better serve you in the future.

There are so many challenges that we encounter in our daily life as citizens living in the country that is rated below poverty line. As partners you know what kind of challenges we face in our daily walk of life. Please do pray for us and our families to overcome those challenges.

2.2 Construction Projects

Some years back, we made it known to you that we were planning to embark on two construction projects on the BSCO compound at Gulele. The prime aim of these projects is to provide better service to our customers and generate income for BSCO.

2.2.1 G+7 Complex

This complex is designed for multipurpose use and is a seven storey building. It has bed rooms, gym center, cafeteria, shops, etc. The estimated cost of the total project is **ETB 7,000.000 (seven million Ethiopian Birr)**.

We do have enough land or space to build this complex on. This space is rated, by the city government of Addis Ababa, **#1** as it is located by the side of the main road and, on which one must build a standardized complex as per the requirements of the city. Unless we utilize this land by constructing buildings such as that we have proposed now, the government will take away the property from the church and give it to potential investors whether they are from Ethiopia or abroad. This is the new regulation of the city. If taken away, that will be a big blow to the church and will jeopardize the whole evangelism and development and social services in the five synods, and might also affect PC-USA in one way or another.

Hence, we are working very hard to get some funds to start the project in the near future. In due course of starting the project we may approach some of our partners to stretch their very kind hands to us. In the mean time, we will continue to raising funds and embark on the project splitting it into phases. Once we get started the project, the government can do nothing to us.

We, therefore, humbly and kindly request you to pray for us as we are trying our level best to raising funds and to show us your usual kindness and generosity by raising funds for this noble project.

2.2.2 Additional Guest House

Number of guests coming either from inland or abroad to use our guest houses increases from time to time. There were times that we had to put our guests (from abroad) in a hotel. For various reasons,

many of our guests from abroad prefer to stay in the church guest house than in hotel.

This situation calls for an additional guest house construction. The new guest house is well designed for a private use and will have 10 single bed rooms. The total project cost is **ETB 900,000.00 (nine hundred thousand Ethiopian Birr)**.

As this is a very urgent matter, we are planning to start the project with the small funds at our disposal, so soon. Raising funds for this project will also continue.

Thus, we kindly request you to support this project financially and with your prayer.

2.2.3 EECMY-BSCO Concept Document on Relationship and Structural Setup

For so many reasons it became very necessary to develop EECMY-BSCO Concept Document on Relationships and Structural Setup.

BSCO Concept Document Preparation Committee (BSCO-CDPC), which consists of three persons (Rev. Yonas Yegezu, Rev. Teferi Berkessa, & Ato Petros Tsanu), has prepared zero draft and presented it to BSCO-AC in mid December. The BSCO-AC has endorsed the draft with some amendments and resolved the committee to continue working on it.

So, preparation of this document will continue, and, we need your prayer for the BSCO-CDPC to accomplish its task in a good time.

III. The FIVE EECMY-Bethel Synods

The five EECMY-Bethel Synods, namely: EGBS, WGBS, IBS, WWBS and SWBS do operate in the West and Southwestern part of Ethiopia. The name "BETHEL" is retained by these synods as it emanated from the work of the first American Presbyterians and the name was given by the native pioneers in Dambi Dollo. When

merged with the ECMY, “the Evangelical Church Bethel” was not dictated to leave its name, and continued as one national church till today.

3.1 Leaders

Since the beginning and end of 2009, the four Bethel synods have their leaders changed through elections held at their respective synods.

In mid February, IBS has held its 11th Convention in which Rev. Tariku Tollosa was elected and succeeded Rev. Yadetta Krita, President of the Synod. Hence, all the Synods are now led with the new leadership.

We, therefore, kindly request you to lift up those new leaders in your prayer so that God gives them a wisdom and patience to lead the flock gently & carefully.

3.2 Partnership Development

We enjoy and thank God for being a partner with individual churches and presbyteries in PC-USA and, very recently, with ELCA.

The EECMY-South West Bethel Synod (SWBS) in September 2009 has signed Companion Synod Covenant (CSC) with South Eastern Synod of the ELCA, located in Atlanta, GA. Ethiopian Missions Team consists of five persons from SES-ELCA has made Partnership Inauguration Trip to SWBS, following the Covenant signed. The SES-ELCA and, the other partner of EECMY-SWBS, Washington Presbytery will continue to work together for the glory of God and the development of the Synod. Washington Presbytery has been in partnership with SWBS, now, over 15 years, and has contributed a great deal to the growth of the Synod in many aspects.

The companion relationship of the EECMY-Western Wollega Bethel Synod (WWBS) and Sasquhanah Valley Presbytery is very active and they continue to exchange people and resources. Likewise, Illubabor Bethel Synod (IBS) partners with Shenandoah Presbytery and recently both have celebrated their 20th anniversary in the U.S.A.

The two other synods, Eastern Gamble Bethel Synod (EGBS) and Western Gamble Bethel Synod (WGBS) are working very hard to develop partnership with churches or presbyteries in the USA.

The companion relationship exists for the purpose of strengthening one another for life and mission within the body of Christ. It offers us the privilege of participating in the life of another church through prayer, study, communication, and exchange of people and resources.

At this juncture, we would like to thank all our partners for being faithful and good partners and to extend our appreciation for all kinds of services they have rendered to the five EECMY-Bethel Synods.

Let God binds us together to continue participate in God's Mission around the globe.

3.3 Expansion of Evangelism Work

Although, there are so many challenges, there is a great expansion of evangelism work into unreached areas in all five EECMY-Bethel Synods.

For instance, the EECMY South West Bethel Synod (SWBS)-Mizan Teferl and the EECMY South West Synod (SWS)-Arab Minch have started a joint venture to reach the Meden tribe that inhabits between SWBS-Maji Bethel Parish and SWS-Jinka Parish.

The two synods in consultation and collaboration with the EECMY-Outreach Coordination Office will work together to close the gap by reaching the tribe with Good News.

There are some arrangements and preparations underway to embark on the task. Please pray for both Synods as they gird their loins to confront the evil one, emancipate those in the bondage of Satan, and win souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As tried to mention above, there are so many challenges that Synods encounter as they take the Gospel to unreached areas. Please pray to all the synods and, when requested, support them in one way or another.

3.4 The Old “Evangelical Church Bethel” Movement

The Church always *“looks for a crop of good grapes but it yields only bad fruit.”* (Is. 51:2c)

Some individuals who were once trained, employed by the church, and served in the synods are now became enemies of the church. The church expected them to be good leaders, evangelists, pastors, and loyal to the church but they bear so many bad fruits. They chose their own way and only want to pursue their interests.

Those individuals declared that they have re-established the old “Evangelical Church Bethel”, caused a lot of confusion among Christians, and damage to the holistic ministry of the EECMY in the five EECMY-Bethel Synods.

Their act is not, at all, acceptable by the church and is to be condemned. They were repeatedly told to stop their bad doings and refused to do so. Finally, the affected synods took the matter to courts in their respective areas and are waiting for the verdict. Those synods have spent a lot of money for court cases that could have been used for spreading the Gospel.

Meanwhile, synods are making a network to share information and protect their flocks from going astray and being taken away. Moreover, preparation is underway to teach all the constituencies of the synods about the inception of Evangelical Church Bethel and its amalgamation with the ECMY.

This situation deserves your prayer and support in many ways. Be aware of those individuals lest they may approach and confuse you, too.

3.5 A Challenging Religion

As all of you are already aware of there is a known religion that challenges the whole Christian world, than ever before. Particularly, our Land, Ethiopia is becoming a fertile soil for the rapid growth of this religion.

Some youth that seek for jobs (economic dependency) in Arab countries easily convert to this religion, and are amongst those who spread the religion upon their return from such countries.

Since few years back, the followers of this religion, within the country itself, have settled amongst Protestant Christians in the West and southwestern and are becoming a dominant one and influence Christians to conform to their faith.

Thus, it is a big challenge for all of us and we extend our call to you to pray for us to reach those people with the saving Word of God.

3.6 Cost of Living

As the inflation rate in the country gets higher and higher the purchasing power of the Ethiopian Birr (ETB) is declining and getting weaker and weaker. As a result of this, many can't afford anything and can't cope with the situation.

Church members are not able to pay their tithes and give gifts as they used to support the work of their respective congregations. At some places, they can't afford paying the salary of the evangelist or pastor.

In many synods, skilled (professional) workers leave their responsibility and join government or non-governmental organizations for a better salary. This is simply because the Synods can't make any salary increment to their employees from time to time, whereas, the government and others do it now and then. Consequently, there is a very high staff turn-over and the works of the synods suffer a lot.

We do need your prayer for the improvement of the country's economy and stability in the synods.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion of our up-dates on the current situation, we want to quote St. Paul's letter to Philippians 1:3-6 in which he thanks God and prays to Christians in Philippi because of their partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now. The apostle went on saying, "*... that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the Day of Jesus.*"

As Paul does, we do also have the same stand with respect to our partnership in the Gospel. This partnership will be strengthened to achieve many of our goals and we will continue to carry on the multifaceted activities in unison for the glory of God and the betterment of the community we serve.

May the Almighty God help us to stay connected until the Day of the Lord. Amen!

We pray for the Ethiopian Mission Network meeting in which God's presence shall be seen, His blessings to those who take part, and for the successful ending of the meeting.

PT/BSCO

March 2010, A.A.