

Last year we renewed our Partnership between Western Wollega Bethel Synod in Ethiopia and the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley, so we now are in year 21 of our special mission relationship. This work was originally overseen by a committee of presbytery, with elected representatives responsible for the communications and thousands of mission dollars – from both the presbytery mission budget and designated gifts from local congregations and individuals. Since a presbytery re-organization in 2005, a mission “team” instead provides leadership for our international work. However, this has meant that volunteers who aren’t elected by the presbytery are in charge of major financial and administrative decisions. Junieta Brooks (Elder, Northminster Church) who has been chairing the Ethiopian Partnership Mission Team, has served since the beginning. The Team seeks more members, especially from churches who have made financial donations to the Ethiopian Partnership, so that there is more participation and churches who have a stake in this vital mission are appropriately represented.

In 2019 Western Wollega Bethel Synod plans a big celebration of the 100th year an American Presbyterian Missionary brought Christianity to Western Ethiopia. Western Wollega Bethel Synod (WWBS) is on the pointy tip of Ethiopia, bordering South Sudan. The native peoples in western and southern Ethiopia are Oromos, traditionally subsistence farmers and wandering tribesmen, who are the most numerous group of tribal peoples (about 21 million population). However, Oromos are the most discriminated against in Ethiopia, where the Amhara (about 16 million) are in control of the government. A year ago there were violent protests of the Ethiopian government for confiscating Oromo farm lands and beating and jailing the Oromo peoples, with human rights organizations reporting hundreds of deaths around the capital of Addis Ababa.

Ethiopia is the poorest country in Africa, and drought and famine have exacerbated the poverty of the majority. Ethiopia has never recovered from the 2009 worldwide economic recession. The value of the Ethiopian birr has continued to decline – current exchange rate is 1 USD = 23.42 birr (worse than 22.14 birr last year, and back in 2000, the rate was 1 USD = 6.86 birr). The Ethiopian economy doesn’t provide adequate monetary support to the rural and remote Western Wollega area, populated by Oromo tribes, compared to the urban area around Addis, populated by the ruling Amhara class.

Last fall in 2016, Desalegn Teresa began as new director of the Birhane Yesus Elementary School (BYES) in Dembi Dollo, after serving more than 20 years. Upon receiving the annual \$2,000 support for his school this summer, he sent a message thanking us very much and asking that we would pray for them.



abandoned them after all.

sisters Jane & Caroline Kurtz

Caroline Kurtz, who along with 4 siblings was raised in Ethiopia by missionary parents, has come up with a new project to bring solar power to the remote Maji area of Ethiopia where her parents served. Her Spring 2017 newsletter will be available for the presbytery. She is looking for \$250 contributions to cover the cost of each solar unit, with an original goal of bringing units to 300 families.

- Students can do homework after dark.
- Women have light to care for children at night.
- Less fuelwood is burned after dark, helping to preserve the dwindling forestland.
- Women and children are healthier, with fewer smoke-caused eye and bronchial afflictions.
- People are empowered when they see that the global community hasn't

Two years ago, in 2015, the SVP Approved Budget allocated \$24,100 for Ethiopian Partnership Team program expenses; in 2016 and 2017, only \$15,000 was available, which impacted our ability to support our WWBS partners, whose financial situation is rather desperate. Our planned budget spending of presbytery mission support for 2017 repeated 2016:

	2015 EPMT Budget Expenses	2016 & 2017 Budget Expenses
4 Schools @\$2000 each – BYES, BESS, Gidada, EREP	\$8000	\$8000
Scholarships – BYES, Kindergarten & BESS	\$3000	
WWBS Discretion (eg Elder Training)	\$2500	\$2000
WWBS Women’s Ministry	\$1200	\$1000
Mission Worker Support (Wellers, Stelles, Wilson)	\$2500	\$500
Travel to/from Ethiopia	\$1716 (\$5000 budgeted)	(\$1500 budgeted)
EthMisNet Support	\$500	\$500
EthMisNet Conference Delegates (\$1500 projected)	\$3602 (2 SVP + 1 WWBS)	\$1538, \$1257 (2 SVP)
Mileage, meals for visitors	\$399 (Woreti Gelalcha)	\$410 (Haspels)
TOTAL	\$23,417	\$13,538, \$14,757

The Ethiopian Partnership Team has been able to respond to WWBS emergency requests for help only through having undesignated gifts and carry over funds unspent from the previous year. For 3 years now, we have been able to send \$1400 USD annually to the church-run high school in Dembi Dollo, Bethel Evangelical Secondary School (BESS), to cover the cost of government required teacher training in the summer for 2 teachers. Just \$750 USD covers tuition, room and board for a BESS student – we used to be able to provide scholarships as a presbytery, but now rely on churches and individuals to make special gifts to help pay for student scholarship support. Education has traditionally been a high value for Presbyterians, and support for the Synod schools has been a priority since our Partnership began.

We are extremely grateful for the Designated Gifts that are given by generous churches. Christ Community Church Cortlandville sends \$750 for a BESS scholarship each year from an August BBQ/Yard Sale. Union Endicott has Christmas promotions supporting WWBS. This year we have sent \$350 for books for BESS, and \$1480 additional support for the Ethiopian Rural Education Project (EREP). We’d like to thank the following churches for 2017 donations to the Ethiopian Partnership: Union Endicott, Ross Memorial Binghamton, First Delhi, Owego, Northminster Endwell and also end of year 2016 donations from First Oneonta and First United Oneonta, United Walton, Gilbertsville, and Bainbridge.

Cheryll Berg, who, along with Lynn Reeves, attended the Ethiopian Mission Network Conference this spring, will be bringing our verbal report to the Presbytery Assembly on Sat. Sept. 16th at Nineveh. At the EthMisNet Conference, one of the projects promoted was a book collection for the Western Gambela Bethel Synod’s Jordan Bible School in Ethiopia. Ed Pollock of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church in Maryland is coordinating the project. Locally, Cheryll Berg of Owego is helping coordinate the project. More information can be found on the website: <http://www.serve-intl.org/> Cheryll will have flyers with more information at the Presbytery Assembly.

Junieta Brooks, Peg Corwin, Lynn Reeves, Cheryll Berg, Diane Vredenburg, Janet Adair Hansen (the Ethiopian Partnership Mission Team)

BOOK COLLECTION FOR JORDAN BIBLE SCHOOL IN ETHIOPIA

Another project presented at the Ethiopian Mission Network Conference is a book collection project for the Western Gambella Bethel Synod's Jordan Bible School in Ethiopia. Western Gambella Bethel Synod is just below Western Wollega Bethel Synod (with whom Susquehanna Valley Presbytery has our partnership). Both are part of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (formerly part of the Presbyterian Church in Ethiopia). Ed Pollock of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Maryland is coordinating the project. Locally, Cheryll Berg of Owego is helping coordinate the project. More information can be found on the website: <http://www.serve-intl.org/>

The Jordan Bible School, the Synod's only school for training church leaders, currently has a maximum capacity of 30 students and is limited to offering a two-year certificate program. The Synod wants to double the capacity of the Jordan Bible School and upgrade it to be able to offer a three-year diploma program. To be able to offer a diploma program, the school must have a 7,000 volume library. St. Andrew's has committed to helping the Jordan Bible School meet the library requirement.

Classes at the Jordan Bible School are taught in English. In general the age of the book is not important as long as the book is in good shape. Both hard cover and paperback are acceptable. In addition to the types of books listed, many of the students also need a personal copy of the Bible in English. St. Andrews is looking for books on Biblical studies, commentaries, commentaries (Any academic commentaries except for the Interpreter's Bible Commentary – Old Edition), Bible Dictionaries and Bible Handbooks, Bible concordance, Secondary and background studies to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, linguistic Tools (Greek, Hebrew), Theology: historical and modern, Church History/Historical Theology, Ethics, Philosophy, Missiology/Cross-Cultural Studies, Christian Education, Leadership, Reference Material: Encyclopedias of Theology, Religion, and Bible. If we collect the books locally, St. Andrews will coordinate the shipping and cataloging.

Cheryll will be collecting books in September through mid-October. She can be contacted by email at Cheryll@thunderbirdatlatl.com



Presbyterian Church Nasir Parish Youth Group at Western Gambella Bethel Synod