

2016 is the 20th Anniversary of the Partnership between Western Wollega Bethel Synod in Ethiopia and the Presbytery of Susquehanna Valley, and we are looking forward to renewing the partnership for another 5 years at our September 17th assembly.



You might have seen in Olympic news from Brazil last month that Ethiopian runner Feyisa Lilesa made an “X” arm gesture both at the end of the men’s marathon and as he accepted his silver medal. This was a protest gesture against the Ethiopian government for their confiscation of Oromo farm lands and discrimination against the Oromo peoples. Lilesa did not fly home with the rest of the Ethiopian team after the Olympics, fearing arrest or even death. The Ethiopian government engaged in violent attacks on student Oromo protesters last fall, and continued outbreaks have resulted in an estimated 400

deaths and thousands imprisoned (Amnesty International and Human Right Watch). Although ethnic Oromo tribes people are about 21 million in population and Amhara are only 16 million, the Amhara are the ruling class, controlling the Addis Ababa government. The Oromo are traditionally subsistence farmers and wandering tribesmen – their southern and western territories are known as Oromia. Western Wollega Bethel Synod, on the western tip of Ethiopia, is part of Oromo lands.

Ethiopia has again been experiencing a drought and famine. Ethiopia, which has been going through development in the last 30 years, 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 = 22.14 birr; back in the year 2000, the rate was 1 USD = 6.86 birr. Not only is Ethiopia in economic crisis, but the Western Wollega area, which is both a remote rural area and populated by Oromo tribes, doesn’t get equal monetary support compared to the urban area around Addis, populated by ruling Amhara class.

The Ethiopian Partnership Team has been able to respond to emergency requests for help only through having undesignated gifts and, some years, carry over funds unspent from the program budget. Fortunately, we began 2016 with \$5,828.27 carry-over that we could use in addition to budgeted \$15,000 for program expenses. The Ethiopian government sets school standards and Bethel Evangelical Secondary School (BESS) Director Amanuel Tesfaye notified us that the 11th & 12th grade textbooks had to be replaced for fall – we were able to send \$2000 USD (in 2015 we were able to send \$1000 to replace 9th grade textbooks). The government also charges for non-government school teachers to receive required training – we were able to send \$1400 for training this summer. Chali Josef Leta, an officer with WWBS, let us know that the Kindergarten was in dire need of funds, and we were able to send \$500. Finally, we used to have BESS scholarship help in our presbytery operating budget, but that had been cut; we decided to send \$750, one scholarship worth, for the school term starting this fall. Education has traditionally been a high value for Presbyterians, and support for the Synod schools has been a priority since our Partnership began. We received this thank you from the BESS Director on Aug. 31st, on learning of our \$2000 help for textbooks, and \$2500 for various scholarships:

Dear our friends of SVP,

I bring you warmest greetings from BESS.

I really appreciate all your love and concern towards our community in Dembi Dollo. Thank you very much for standing beside us. It means a lot to us. I was really touched by all what you are doing for us. Thank you for showing Christ's love to us.

I have good news for you all our 10th and 12th graders who sat for national exam has achieved excellent result and in our province we are the leading. Thank you for your contributions.

I will notify you when the funds arrive in BESS account. [A Sept. 2nd email said the funds had arrived.]

Blessings, Amanuel (Tsfaye)

The 2015 SVP Approved Budget allocated \$24,100 for Ethiopian Partnership Team program expenses; for 2016, only \$15,000 was available, so we had to cut \$9,100 from planned expenses. The chart below shows what we had budgeted and what we actually spent last year in 2015 and this year in 2016. In 2015 we had allowed more in travel to and from Ethiopia. We budgeted \$5,000 and only spent \$1716 to bring over Qes Woreti, but we need to save for when we can send another delegation (which we last did in Feb. 2014). In 2015 we also ended up spending more for the Ethiopian Mission Network Conference than \$1400 we'd projected – spending: \$3602 to fly two people from SVP plus Qes Woreti to California, where the April 2015 EthMisNet was held.

For 2016 we cut \$3000 from scholarship help, reduced WWBS general discretion help (they do January elder training out of those funds) from \$2500 to \$2000, reduced women's ministry from \$1200 to \$1000, reduced mission worker support from \$2500 to \$500. {PCUSA missionaries used to receive support from the denomination in Louisville, but now have to raise their own funding.} We hadn't included travel to attend the April 2016 EthMisNet conference in 2016 budget, which had been budgeted \$1400 in the past, so that was in place of travel to/from Ethiopia.

	2015 EPMT Budget Expenses	2016 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 (Stelles, Wilson)	\$2500	\$500
Travel to/from Ethiopia	\$1716 (\$5000 budgeted)	(\$3000 budgeted)
EthMisNet Support	\$500	\$500
EthMisNet Conference Delegates (\$1400 projected)	\$3602 (2 SVP + 1 WWBS)	\$1538 (2 SVP)
Mileage, meals for Qes Woreti visit April-May 2015	\$399	
TOTAL	\$23,417 (\$24,100 budget)	\$13,538 (\$15,000 budget)

We are extremely grateful for the Designated Gifts that have come for 2016 – the Nineveh Church and a related family each support a female student at BESS for \$750 for the school year, and Christ Community Church also sent \$750 scholarship support from an August BBQ/Yard Sale. A total of \$725 for mattresses for the Gidada Theological School was collected last winter and sent in February. We've also received \$100 for the Rural Education Project (EREP) – a summer fundraiser by a couple of churches and ministers, and \$50 for BESS tuition from Garrattsville. We'd like to thank the following churches for 2016 donations to the Ethiopian Partnership: Union Endicott, Oneonta Red Door, East Guilford, Ross Memorial, Owego, Delhi First, and Nineveh, totaling \$1665 YTD.

Junieta Brooks, Diane Vredenburg & the Ethiopian Partnership Mission Team



Christ Community Church (Cortlandville) pianist Dorothy Thomas getting hugs from children in Dembi Dollo during February, 2014 visit to Ethiopia with six other SVP representatives.