

Lumembo & Kalangu Sept-2020 Newsletter



I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. (Psalm 119:16)

Ethiopian Mission: Already One Year!

Thank you for your faithful partnership.

ONESIMOS NESIB SEMINARY: MOVING TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



ONS is seeking new ways to sustain its livelihood. A retreat centre is scheduled to open before December 2020

Moving toward a sustainable future is an Onesimos Nesib Seminary (ONS) new project (2020-2026). This is an exercise for which I have taken the leadership as an adviser to the Principal. As many seminaries and religious institutions across the world, ONS is struggling to survive in an increasing financial pressure environment though the Students enrolments have been steady during the last 20 years. On the average, every year ONS recruits 33 Students both in the Diploma and Degree programs. Revenue streams from tuitions are just not enough to run the institution. The major funders have stopped to finance ONS. This is the main reason why over the next couple of years, ONS will be seeking donors and create projects, such as the ONS Retreat Centre which is scheduled to open before the end of this year to generate funds and become independent financially.



Before the pandemic, I had visitors in my house: from left to right: Moné, Meti, Sanyi, Falmatou and Nimona in the centre.

TO ALL OUR PRAYER AND DONORS PARTNERS

We have kept all of you in our prayers since the beginning of COVID-19. Like many other people around the world, we also hope that the Lord has kept you in good health. Thank you for ongoing prayers and financial support during this first year of our mission (Sept. 2019 to Sept.2020). As we start our second year, your involvement in the Ethiopian mission does make a difference. Your continuous prayers and support will be even more important as we are now facing new challenges with the pandemic and social issues in our mission field. God bless you richly!



ONS: Classrooms, Teachers offices and inside the seminary chapel

Interview with Pastor Tadese Disasa



Retired ONS Principal and still dynamic, Pastor Tadese has accepted to give us an interview on the topic “the Bible, the Church and the Christian lifestyle”. Here is a summary of his thought. How Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Christians live in the Aira congregations and even other parts of Ethiopia denotes a mixture of several influences: Ethiopian Orthodox, Pentecostals, Charismatic and even some practices from the Oromo culture itself. Christianity is vibrant in rural Ethiopia, borrowing from diverse cultures to the point that no one would expect Lutheranism to be practiced in

Ethiopia the same way as it is practiced in North America.

The Bible is an important document in the EECMY. Though translated in Afan Oromo for people who speak that language, it does not receive the same attention in terms of reading. Many Christians are not familiar with the biblical stories and rely solely on the Sunday’s Preachers. It is sad that mid-week Bible studies in most of our congregations have disappeared. Because only 17% of the Oromo people are Christians according to our best estimates, there is a big need in Ethiopia to train more Church workers, mainly Pastors, Evangelists, Church Planters, Deaconesses and Deacons, Sunday School Teachers etc. If people understand the meaning of the Gospel message and how it relates to them, they will be inclined to read and apply the Bible correctly.

Gospel and culture are so intertwined nowadays in our Churches that any Missionary that comes to our land must pay special attention to Missiology and Theology of mission if he wants his ministry to bear fruits for the Kingdom of God.

MISSIONARY LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 pandemic has brought to my missionary life new challenges as I found myself most of the days in quarantine, many times without network, communications and electricity in the night. Unable to attend Sunday worship services, the Holy Spirit has inspired me to build an altar in my living room. Since the beginning of this year, I have started to re-read the entire Scriptures every day, starting with Genesis, one chapter at a time. Since then, I have never felt loneliness. Every morning from 5:30 am to 6:30 am, I read and meditate on the chapter, writing down any thought related to God’s mission in my daily planner. I felt like walking with Moses and the Israelites every day hearing the Lord’s voice. These readings are a true blessing in these hard times for me and those I happen to meet, always having a message to share.



Living Room Altar



Products from Kalangu's garden: from top to bottom: Cassava plant and cooked cassava leaves



Kalangu's little friends waiting for her return: Falmatou, Nimona, Naga and Sanyi . On the right : Missionary Kalangu in Aira

BIBLE LITERACY : STILL A BIG ISSUE

Though many Christians in Aira recognize that reading the Bible, "*Macaafa Qulqulluu*", in Afan Oromo should be their daily spiritual food like any other food that nourish their bodies, a survey that I conducted in July and August 2020 among Pastors, Church leaders and Lay people has revealed the following results ;

- 100% agree that one cannot be a good Christian without reading his or her Bible regularly, yet only 20% of the respondents in the sample (n=35 persons) read their Bible every day;
- 80% said reading the Bible is not a priority for many people;



- 40% who read the Bible said that some Bible verses are offensive for women;
- Among those who read, 45% don't understand most of the Old Testament texts
- 100% agree that the local congregations should train their Christians on how to read the Bible properly.

As I shared these results with the Pastors and the Respondents, all agreed that I should organize a workshop on Bible literacy as the Lord has already put this burden on me. This must be a reason why the Lord sent you and your spouse to our land, they concluded after hearing my comments on these results.

MEETING WITH YOUNG AIRA CHRISTIANS



From left to right: Abdi a young neighbour and a group of students in my living room: Yadnet Hambisa, Samuel Megersa, Tayeshi Dibaba, Dibaba Megersa and Kumbi Melkamu

During the last six months, before the COVID-19 hit up Aira, I had many encounters with the youth in Aira. As I was living alone, they thought I would have more time to answer their queries about the Christian faith. And also general questions about Canada. Many of these youths are very ambitious and dream to travel abroad one day after they finish their secondary schools. In the local congregations, no Bible studies are organized during the week. Youth has a special service on Sundays afternoons. Because of coronavirus, their service has been cancelled. The big service, at least at the Lalo congregation, which claims 1,500 members, was divided into two services in order to respect the social distancing, one service in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

Most of the youth questions deal with the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular. They want to know for example the meaning of the Lord's Supper, the reasons Jesus had to teach in parables instead of using a direct speech, the meaning and necessity of tongues speaking, the teachings of the New testament vs. the Old Testament, the reasons why Ethiopia needed Missionaries, the differences between Mekane Yesus Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox

Tewahedo Church etc. Through these informal conversations, I realized that many of them never read the New Testament in Afan Oromo and were not familiar with the ministry of Jesus Christ as narrated in the four Gospels. The command of their English language is also very limited. Few of them possess a Bible. I saw in these young faces searching how to be true to Christ. This is also part of my mission : Bringing the light of the Gospel to this special group .



Visiting the main market in Gulisso near Aira



Ifama came to my house and said:" I want to learn English"

MINISTRY UPDATE

- To date, the Seminary is still waiting for the Government to announce the official reopening of the school, though registrations took place Sept. 17, 2020;
- During the pandemic, ONS managed to have the students finish their year by collecting syllabus on campus and sending back the assignments to ONS through one of them ;
- Since Sept.03, 2020, I am in Addis Ababa for the renewal of my work permit and one year visa card ID. Kalangu will get hers upon her return to Ethiopia next year;
- The Graduation for this academic year Students took place Saturday September 19, 2020. 41 Students, among them 36 males and 5 females graduated. These Students will be serving in five Synods;
- I have been working with ONS Principal during the last four months, writing funding proposals for the Seminary. This work is still going on.
- On my calendar : Lead a workshop on Bible literacy in October with 50 Church workers at the Lalo Congregation in Aira;
- As soon as the classes reopen, I will be teaching two courses : Theological English and Theology of mission;
- I plan to take my furlough Mid-November 2020 till February 10, 2021 in Toronto, Canada. This will allow us to thank all our Donors and Prayer partners and talk to them face to face during a presentation at St Matthew Lutheran Church

FAMILY UPDATE: KALANGU STILL IN CANADA FOR MEDICAL ATTENTION

Since December 28, 2019, my wife who is a Missionary as well had to leave Ayira, Ethiopia as her health was deteriorating and demanded more careful medical attention in Canada. As of the time I am sending you this E-Newsletter, she has not recovered completely and still has more tests to be done. As you may understand, this means that our financial plans have been distorted with her sudden departure and medical bills, leaving me with a hole. My commitment with the Seminary is for two years (2019-2021) and right now, we will be short of funds if we do not get enough support on your part in the coming months, that is to say 750 dollars each month for the next 12 months to complete until September 2021. Thank you to all your prayers and financial support you will be considering for this God's work in Ethiopia.

INFORMAL THEOLOGICAL CONVERSATION WITH LAY PEOPLE



From left to right: With an unknown Coffee break in Addis, with Taje Akuma, in Aira and with my neighbour Alemi Hambisa

Since my arrival in Aira one year ago, the Lord has led me to engage people in meaningful theological conversations. Anywhere or everywhere I happen to go, I introduce myself and start a conversation asking people to share with me if they are willing about their experiences with God, the church and Christianity. I always assured them that they don't need to be professional theologians or regular Churchgoers to talk about Church and religion. During the last couple of months, as the Lord gave me the opportunities and people opening up to a conversation, I listened to them, sometimes with the help of one interpreter if needed. What I have learned so far is amazing: the local congregations have still a lot of work to do in the areas of Bible literacy, discipleship, church dogmas and interreligious dialogue. Ethiopia has all the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) with a large proportion of Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and growing numbers of traditional religions, folk religions and sects.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the Onesimos Nesib Seminary Staff and Students as they are awaiting the government permission to start this new academic year 2020-2021. Pray that they are protected, not only as they teach and learn, but also as the staff minister to the Students;
- Pray for the TSHISWAKAS as they will start their second year in mission and that God will restore Kalangu's health so that she may return safely to Aira to continue her ministry;
- Pray for all Prayer and Donors partners that the Lord will protect them against the virus and provide them enough means and prayer time and finances to support the Tshiswakas financially and prayerfully so that they may fulfill God's mission in Ethiopia.
- Pray for peace in the land of mission so that the Gospel will be proclaimed to the unreached people and a spirit of true discipleship will transform those who are already in the Church.
- Pray for safe travel and successful and blessed furlough for Pastor Lumembo Tshiswaka as he will be travelling soon to Canada.

To support us in Canada	To support us online:
<p>Please make checks payable to: St. Matthew Lutheran Church <i>Write "Lumembo Mission" on the memo line.</i></p> <p>Mail checks to: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Matthew. 3159 Lawrence Avenue East Scarborough ON M1H1A1</p>	<p>Go to www.globallutheranoutreach.com/blog/lumembo Click on "GIVE"</p>
	<p>Or in US:</p> <p>Make checks payable to: Global Lutheran Outreach <i>Write "Lumembo" on the memo line.</i></p> <p>Mail checks to: Global Lutheran Outreach 6709 Ficus Drive Miramar, FL 33023</p>