
THE VOICE

**Official Newsletter of Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship
Box 323 Winkler, MB R6W 4A5 / Phone: 204-325-8248**

E-mail: efellowship@gmail.com / Website: www.anabaptists.ca

Volume 16 Issue 1

March 2014

Ethiopia Tour Group 2014



I write this report on my day off, just over a week since Karen and I stepped off the plane. We are back home after almost three weeks of touring around Ethiopia. It was a fantastic experience - life changing, as Karen puts it. I want to share some of this experience with you, our readers, through this report; just to give you a glimpse of our experience of Ethiopia - the country, the culture, and the Miserete Kristos Church.

Ethiopia and the Gospel

During our adventures in cities like Debre Zeit, Nazaret, Addis Ababa, Lalibela, Gondor, and Axum, our tour group picked up plenty of stories, testimonies, historical facts, and archaeological information. Although I'm sure that I only have scratched the surface, I do feel I have a much greater understanding of the place than I did before. Ethiopian history is fascinating for many reasons, not least of which is its religious history. The Abrahamic faith first came to this land through the relationship between Queen Sheba and King Solomon. The locals tell the legend of how King Solomon seduced the Queen on her visit, and she returned to Ethiopia carrying his son, King Menelik. This affair forever changed the course of Ethiopia's history. Menelik led the charge of bringing Judaism (and supposedly the Ark of the Covenant) to Ethiopia. Then, in the fourth century, the churches of Antioch and Alexandria sent nine evangelist bishops to Ethiopia; and, once again, the face of Ethiopia was forever changed, as its politicians and people accepted the orthodox faith. Since then, the Orthodox Church has held enormous influence in Ethiopia. Even today, with a secular government in power, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church asserts

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much influence in the lives of the people, both for good and for ill, as I'll share below. We often heard the prayer calls over the loudspeakers as we walked and drove around. And on Sundays, or any other holy day, we would see throngs of men and women walking to church for worship, dressed in their white prayer shawls.

Cultural Adventures

To visit and tour Ethiopia is to enter into a very different but also incredibly beautiful culture. The people are warm, loving, hospitable, and tender. Men walk down the street holding the hands of their male friends; and likewise with the women. Hugs abound. And the common greeting involves kissing your friend's cheeks three times; or giving them a sturdy "shoulder bump". The people love to show their affection through a friendly embrace or touch. Another thing that jumped out at us tourists was the passion Ethiopians have for good coffee, and the communal ritual attached to it. We saw coffee shops at nearly every street corner, with a woman sitting next to a coal stove, cooking up some ultra-strong espresso-like coffee, most often taken with a generous helping of cane sugar. Many of us, myself included, came to crave this Ethiopian drink and partook as often as time allowed. It's impossible to adequately describe Ethiopian culture in such a short piece, but I do want to mention the food.

The Ethiopian signature dish is *Injera*, a sour-dough flatbread made with Teff flour. This flatbread basically takes the place of cutlery, and is used to pick up everything from salads, coleslaws, Wat (stewed beef, lamb, chicken, or goat), or Tibs (strips of barbecued meats). In one hand you hold the role of *Injera*, and the other hand tears a piece off and uses it to grab food off the dish, and then you cram it into your mouth. That's about it, and IT IS FANTASTIC!!! I highly encourage you to try out an Ethiopian restaurant near you. It's well worth the adventure.

The Anabaptist Witness in Ethiopia

Our main purpose on the tour was to learn about what God has done and is doing among the Christians in the Miserete Kristos Church. Our tour began at the MKC College

in Debre Zeit, where we started to learn the history of the church, its college, and its focus of ministry. From this place we began our tour into the heart of MKC territory and ministry. We visited many local churches. We heard testimonies from men and women about how God had changed their life; of how God had delivered them from false teaching, from pagan practice, and had brought them to a saving encounter with Jesus. We saw the places of worship, where hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of believers gathered every Sunday for worship, and once a week for bible study and prayer. We met newly baptized believers learning praise songs. We saw and learned about the MKC Relief and Development work, whose goal and purpose it is to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and social needs of the people. We met courageous evangelists, and heard stories about the growth of the Church in some of the most challenging regions of Ethiopia. For a variety of reasons, the MKC church finds itself struggling to minister in regions that are under heavy influence by groups such as the Orthodox or the Muslim community. In some of these regions, they face persecution, abuse, violence, death, churches and businesses burnt to the ground, and other forms of pressure. Yet the believers are not deterred. Although they face many challenges both from within and without, the MKC give thanks and praise to God that they are found worthy to bear witness to the name of Jesus Christ; they consider their sufferings as pure joy - knowing that they participate, in this difficult way, in the sufferings of Christ, but then also in the VICTORY of Christ.

It was an honour to learn, to see, to hear the witness of the believers of the Miserete Kristos Church. I am so very thankful that someone donated the funds to the Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship which enabled me to participate in this tour. I hope to relate my experiences, the stories, the testimonies, and the culture - so that this blessing can continue on here in Canada; to bring joy and encouragement to us and our Christian witness here in this place.

Report by Pastor Marco Funk, Gretna, MB

Note: Marco Funk will be available to Manitoba churches to share his experiences in Ethiopia.

Contact Information:

E-mail: marco_funk@yahoo.com

Cell: 204-304-0574 Church: 204-327-5790

Don't Drop Your Weapons

Paul also understood that God has given us divine weapons to use in our quest for peace. These weapons include Scripture, prayer, truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (Eph. 6:10-18; Gal. 5:22-23). To many people, these resources and qualities seem feeble and useless when dealing with "real" problems. Yet these are the very weapons Jesus used to defeat Satan and to conquer the world (e.g. Matt. 4:1-11; 11:28-30; John 14:15-17). Since Jesus chose to use these weapons instead of resorting to worldly weapons, we should do the same.

Taken from The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict, by Ken Sande.

Turning Point in World History

The history of nations is marked by key events that are often considered as turning points for a nation or empire. In 49 B.C., Caesar crossed the Rubicon River and impacted the future history of the Roman Empire. Important or fateful decisions to this day are called "Crossing the Rubicon." In 1215 A.D., the King John of England signed the Magna Carta which marked a turning point for all of England.

Of all the key events surrounding ancient empires of Persia or Greece, Rome, or modern Britain, Russia or the U.S., none have come close to the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus. All of World history is divided around this event.

Easter was important because it was God's way of dealing with our separation and estrangement. More than that, the resurrection demonstrated in the most powerful way possible that as believers we can be victorious over sin and death itself.

World religions have many things in common. In general, all religions believe in the existence of a divine being known as god or gods. All religious persons ascribe to ideals of goodness and the affirmation of life. However, only Christians have an empty tomb and a living and present Saviour.

Napoleon, at the end of his life had this to say. "I know men and I tell you, Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love; and at this hour, millions would die for him."

"I search history in vain to find similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. Neither history nor humanity, nor ages, nor nature, offer me anything with which I am able to compare it or to explain it. Here everything is extraordinary." *Bernie Loepky*

SPECIAL PROJECT

Through the generous gift of a donor, EAF has broadcast a weekly "Peace Minute" Sunday mornings on Radio Southern Manitoba, CFAM, CHSM, and CJRB. The year ended with the last broadcast on March 31. These "Peace Minutes" are stories where Jesus' teaching of "overcoming evil with good" worked to witness to the life in the Spirit. To encourage fellow believers to faithfulness and obedience to Jesus, EAF is planning to make those "Peace Minutes" available in a printed booklet, a CD, and on Podcast. In order to do this we need financial assistance from interested supporters. You are invited to send your receiptable donation designated for this project to:

**Special Project c/o EAF
Box 323 Winkler, MB R6W 4A5
Thank you for your support.**

Thank-you

In 2013, many interested persons contributed a total of \$25,895.88 to help EAF proclaim the Good News of Jesus, the forgiveness of sin, and a life of Christian discipleship. Thank-you for each gift. Below is a report of income and expenses for 2013.

**Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship
2013 Income Statement**

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Income: | |
| Donations & Memberships | 25,895.88 |
| Book/DVD Sales | 115.75 |
| Sales Tax Commission/GST Refund/Bank Interest | 217.49 |
| Shipping & Handling | <u>15.00</u> |
| Total Income | 26,244.12 |
| Expenses: | |
| Printing & Postage (Newsletters & Materials) | 3,566.46 |
| Special Meetings | 4,801.50 |
| Radio/Media Advertising | 8,274.00 |
| Office (Rent, Secretarial/Bookkeeping, Supplies, Internet) | 2,856.48 |
| Ethiopia Tour – Designated Gift | 3,000.00 |
| Donations Forwarded (Ethiopia) | 4,535.00 |
| PST/GST/Dues/Bank Charges | <u>1,020.52</u> |
| Total Expenses | 28,053.96 |
| Net Loss | -1,809.84 |

EAF Board Members:

Sam Doerksen, Bothwell Christian Fellowship; Jerry Hildebrand, Winkler EMMC; Jake Krahn, Altona Sommerfeld Mennonite; Menno Kroeker, Rosenort EMC; Bernie Loepky, Grace Mennonite, Winkler; Edwin Plett, Landmark, EMC; Harvey Plett, Landmark EMC; Marco Funk, Gretna Berghaler; John Klassen, Winkler EMMC.

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Contact Information: EAF Box 323 Winkler, MB R6W 4A5
E-mail: eafellowship@gmail.com Cell: 204-362-9444