

Augustana District
Board of World Missions

% Faith Lutheran Church
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Hutchinson, MN 55350

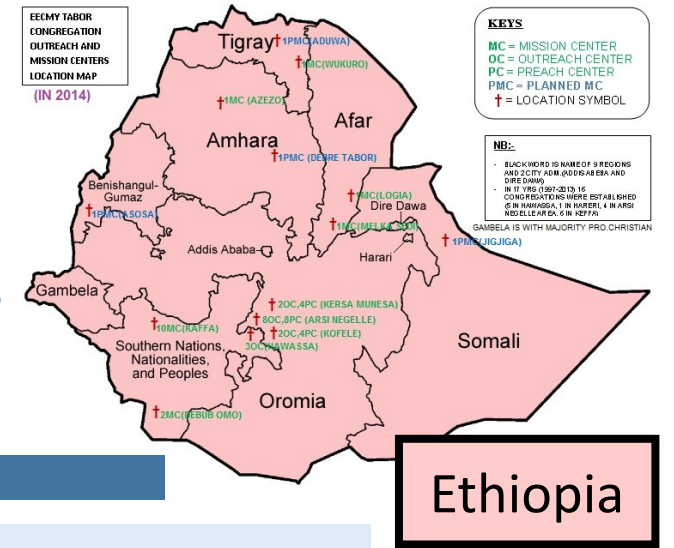
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Board of World Missions

March 2018



An Invitation to Catch and Sustain the Spirit



Intro Word

By Pastor Paul Knudson, Faith, Hutchinson, MN

I had the privilege of sharing eleven inspiring days with our Augustana District delegation. Eight of those days were spent with our partners in Ethiopia. I invite you to catch the spirit the delegates express in being with these amazing witnesses to our-Lord. We believe the delegates' statements, along with the rest of this newsletter, will inspire you to sustain and support continued growth in these partnerships.



Pastor Matt Shields, Shepherd of the Hills, Ubertus, WI

Many times we as Americans believe that the world needs us. But the Evangelical Ethiopian Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) Tabor Congregation is who we should be looking to for direction! They are constantly raising up young people to become evangelists and pastors. They are on a mission to plant new churches and release them once they are self-sustaining. We, in the Augustana District, have the privilege of partnering with them in this work that God has called them to do. They are funding the vast majority of the money needed and their people are putting their lives on the line for the sake of the Gospel. I hope that we can continue to support this partnership and fan the flames of their ministry!



Pastor Nate Hanson, Moe Parish, Hudson, SD

I experienced a number of very meaningful exchanges. It was very gratifying to me to be recognized as a friend from four years ago, to be welcomed with warmth and a common faith in Christ. I remember especially the witness of the evangelists. These servants on the front lines, facing serious and defiant opposition, could see in these trials progress in their mission. Reaching out with a passion for Christ and knowing the work it would require to save souls, their eyes would light up as they told us of their efforts. Every time I encountered one of these ministers of God's grace, I was moved by their dedication and their passion for a living Savior. Times of prayer with these warriors of Christ had a great impact on my soul and renewed my faith.

Pastor Tom Christenson, Hope, Huron, SD

Tabor has proved to be an accountable and trustworthy partner for the Augustana District and its congregations. Having been a witness to the signing of our partnership agreement in 2014, and then seeing first hand in the 2018 visit the progress in ministry settings, evangelist and pastor training and their ongoing dedication to the spreading of the Gospel was gratifying. It filled me with every confidence that our partnership has been blessed by God and is a blessing to both Tabor's Outreach and our need to witness through them.

Pastor Lou Hesse, Living Word, Moses Lake, WA

For three years Living Word has been financially supporting a second partnership with the North Central Ethiopia Synod of EECMY, directed at the training of their 50 plus pastors and evangelists.

I was very impressed by the work of the leaders, pastors, and evangelists we met in Dessie. Working in trying circumstances, in no-frills accommodations, in a place where the population is primarily Muslim, they are planting and growing congregations. Such a small quarterly contribution from our congregations goes so very far in that part of the world. What impressed me the most was arriving at their Seminary one morning to find their Synod President, members of his staff, and a group of students on their knees in prayer in a humble classroom before the start of the day's activities and teachings.



District Council Approves Partnership Supporting Four Pastors in Northern India

After lengthy study the District Council accepted the recommendation of the Board of World Missions to stand with a major mission endeavor in northern India. One of our trusted advisors, Dr. Christoph of Good News Ministries works with All India Masihi Jamat. This highly developed mission has a large number of house churches clustered in parishes located in several northern states of India. Most of the pastors are not in any way supported financially. Yet they bear witness in powerful ways.

Just in the month of January seven baptismal camps were held in which 109 converts were baptized. Nine seeker services were held with 201 coming to be blessed with the living Word of God. Pastor Asad Masih leads this effort.

Our commitment as a District is to send \$125 a month for each of these four pastors. That is \$6,000 is needed to cover the expenses for 2018. Half of that amount (\$2,000 from the district and \$1,000 from one congregation) is already committed. The first quarterly commitment will be sent in late March. Congregations and families are encouraged to share in meeting this need for what we believe is a vital witness.

Thank You for What You Have Done and A Call for Ongoing Generosity for Our Partners in Mission

Four years have gone by since we began our partnerships in Ethiopia. A marvelous story of faithful generosity has been expressed by so many. The Board of World Missions and its partners cannot thank you enough for your support. We are in this for the long haul so that our Lord may be glorified and witness to his name will continue.

You are invited to give throughout the year. The needs of our partners will continue to be lifted up to you not only through newsletters, but you can also follow developments and needs on Facebook and on the Augustana District web site. Thank you so very much for your ongoing prayer and financial support!



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A Word of Introduction

A Word of Gratitude

Wagnew Andarge, President of the North Central Ethiopia Synod shares a few words with us.

Our Synod, in a region where Christian witness goes back to the early 19th century, bears witness today in the northern parts of Ethiopia dominated by the Coptic Orthodox Church and the conservative Islamic religion. Most of our congregations are facing severe persecution that comes from these two religions as well as from the government. However by the grace of the Lord we have grown to 22 congregations and 30 outreach centers.

In our synod we have 60 pastors, evangelists, and other church leaders who are being trained at the diploma and degree level. The students are coming every month for three days to attend their classes from a radius of 500 km. As your district supports this training through one of your congregations, Living Word, in Moses Lake, WA, we are deeply grateful. This support covers a major portion of the students modest fees, modules, and other expenses. This training in basic understanding of Scripture and ministry will make a big difference in their effectiveness. Thank you so very much. We pray our friendship may grow into new levels of partnership.



Zeke Hanson, Professional Photographer and Videographer, and son of Pastor Nate

Zeke was a major blessing to our delegation by documenting our visit with his cameras. When asked if any of his hundreds of photos stuck out for him he chose these two:

The first is an image of a Muslim woman with a baby who walked into the service. It seemed to fit with what the evangelists had been mentioning about the community participating, even if they were not yet Christians. Throughout that service she prayed with the group and participated in the service.

The second photo is of a young girl who is peering over a window ledge as Tom spoke in Dessie in the compound of the unfinished church still in need of a roof. She wanted money and attention, but the reason I like the photo is because she's curious.

Both of these photos show how curiosity brings them in, but the message they get while they are there is what brings them back.



NCES Faces Challenges and is Crying Out for Our Broader Partnership

Our delegation traveled two days out into distant places to witness the challenges of this synod's congregations. We could not assure them that our partnership would go beyond the present training effort. You see here one example of a church structure that is unfinished and in an area with very limited funds. There is no present request to provide help with this and other needs. The District Board of World Missions will wrestle with this call to "come over to Macedonia" and help us. We surely were moved by the leadership of the synod as well as that of the pastors and people we visited.



Encouragement, Fears, and Earnest Prayer Come Together

Pictured below left you see a converted Muslim man who gave property and leadership to a new outreach center of our partners in the Tabor Congregation. Our presence as a delegation from the Augustana District brought needed encouragement to him. Faced with threats from Muslim neighbors, his wife expressed the fears she has for their safety.

Women depicted on the right respond with fervent prayer not only for protection but for the upcoming time of worship.





Tabor Plunges into the Poorest Neighborhoods Giving Birth to a Soon to Be Congregation

Our delegation was riding down fine streets when soon we were on a rough dirt street making our way between potholes, people, and animals until it seemed we were in what had to be one of the poorest parts of Hawassa. It was here that Tabor bought property for a new Outreach Center. Amazingly their efforts resulted in a fast growing gathering of worshippers. Now you see a simple worship center that is the home of what will soon be one more independent congregation. This is just one story of the results of being shaped by the Great Commission. Empowered by the Spirit this one was their "Jerusalem", the city of Hawassa.



"We Are Simply Thankful for Whatever You (the Augustana District) Give to Us."

As our delegation met with the elders and pastors of the Tabor Congregation they shared with us that they were presented with some 35 requests to send evangelists into new areas to further the congregation's witness. They indicated that they had accepted 15 of those invitations. We felt that we had to share with them that we may well not be able to financially keep up with them. Sharing even 40% of the needs to cover their many evangelists seems beyond our ability. To which they said to us, "Don't worry. Do what you can. We will be thankful for that." We were humbled and inspired at the same time.

With Great Joy We Witnessed the Elders Report on Four Years of Partnership

One of the concerns that surfaces from time to time is the question of accountability. In the report from the Elders of Tabor Congregation shown here you see that indeed they have kept excellent records of funds expended for outreach witness, the amount budgeted, the amount given through the Augustana District, and the percentage of our giving. These figures are for 2014-2017. In January 2018 and additional \$21,700 was sent for evangelist support.

Major Activities	Budget	AD Support	%AD
Evangelists support	\$365,936	\$146,378	40%
Church construction	\$69,460	\$32,497	47%
Purchase of land	\$38,936	\$22,928	59%
Farmers support	\$7,400	\$7,400	100%
Van purchase	\$55,398	\$28,769	56%
Training of evangelists & ministers	\$8,246	\$6,250	76%
Total	\$553,939	\$255,192	45%

THANK YOU ONE AND ALL FOR THIS MARVELOUS GENEROSITY.

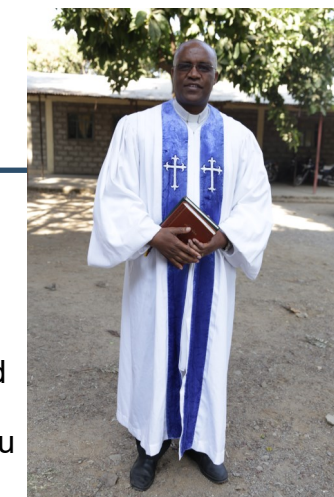


Seventh Worship Center Gives Glory to God and Bears Witness to City

The Tabor Congregation began in 1996 with approximately 375 members. Today after growing through several worship spaces, they are now a congregation of 9,000. This magnificent worship center, in the shape of an ark, has been some ten years in the making. As money was given, more was built. It is not yet finished but thousands are now able to gather inside to worship each Sunday. Many worshippers begin at 7 a.m. with a Communion service. They do not leaving until after noon when the main worship has ended. To the left you see Pastor Paul Knudson giving a greeting to the congregation on behalf of the Augustana District.

A Word of Thanks from Pastor Dawit of the Tabor Congregation

Your delegation's coming to visit Tabor and its outreaches was timely and effective. Your sacrifices are significant and encourage us to press on with our outreach witness. We have already sent 15 additional missionaries out in mission work across the country. Your support multiplies our witness and motivates our evangelists. Let us continue joining hands that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus will be preached throughout Ethiopia and beyond. I wish you all blessings.



Second Partnership with North Central Ethiopia Synod a Major Blessing

Our delegation traveled north to the city of Dessie for days of observing the training of this synod's 50 plus pastors/evangelists that Living Word Lutheran Church in Moses Lake, WA, is supporting. As our delegation met with the president of the synod, Wagnev Andagre, along with other leaders and those being trained it was clear that there was deep appreciation for what one of our District congregations was making possible. Over \$11,000 has been given over the past three years. Pastors come in to the city of Dessie one weekend a month at their own expense for training and then go home to study and learn through materials sent home with them. It was a wonderful time of encouraging these witnesses and better preparing them for witness in a primarily Muslim area.

