

A Concise Report from Ethiopia – April - June, 2019

Phil. 4: 6-7 can serve as an apt opening for this Report, which so declares:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication and thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This is quite an unusual report, which I will call a ‘diploma ordeal.’ Under this theme 4 headings have been developed as follows:

The why surging up of this ordeal? By the end of March, as we were processing for a Support letter from the Religious Bureau, an officer asked us to provide for the details of Joseph’s MA degree, as pertaining to what that MA embraces and the Transcript of that degree. That request didn’t quite surprise us as in more recent years, the Ethiopian government have been asking for the details of educational credentials, which must be accompanied by their authentications up to the highest level of foreign governments.

The bottom line of that policy could best be explained from the Director of the Religious Bureau of the Federal Ministry, when asked by Joseph whether a foreigner who is a qualified engineer or a medical personnel be able to get a Support letter from him, he so pointed out to me: *“unless he possesses credentials in the spiritual and religious realms, none will get a Support letter from this Bureau.”* If no Support letter then no Work Permit and no Foreigner Residence ID. Thus it has become clear that spiritual credentials, such as diploma or degree in Bible or Theology or Missions, are crucially necessary for new missionaries coming to Ethiopia to serve under a spiritual organization these days.

The technicalities of Authentications: Joseph’s case can serve as a vivid example. In just about 2 weeks’ time, Columbia International University (formerly Columbia Bible College & Columbia Graduate School of Bible & Missions) had the new re-issued MA degree and its Transcript notarized by the South Carolina State and sent to Addis Ababa through DHL.

Yet under the new requirements by the Ethiopian government in recent years, the American Embassy here told me to send the documents to Washington DC for the State Department to authenticate them. After this process, it must be again authenticated either by the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC or the American Embassy in Addis Ababa. For my case, it was done through the latter. If the documents were from Canada, it has to follow the same procedure, which is the provincial notarization first then going to “Global Affairs Canada” in Ottawa for the highest level of authentication. After that, again it has to be authenticated either by the Ethiopian Embassy in Ottawa or the Canadian Embassy in Addis Ababa.

How about the authentication process from Hong Kong – an important base of sending forth mission laborers in our time? To find the answers, Joseph paid a visit to the Chinese Embassy here in the middle of June. The information provided has been encouraging with basically the same procedure, i.e. first get the diploma or degree notarized by the City authorities of HK then go to the Ethiopian Consulate in Hong Kong to get it authenticated the 2nd time. Under this order the chief officer, who is Ethiopian, told me that would be sufficient which means no need to come to the Chinese Embassy for their authentication. (Note: in the past we heard about denial of authentication from the Embassy for mainland China nationals whose Christian diploma was issued from a foreign country)

Short-term volunteers made simple: Not a few younger brothers and sisters in our Lord, some still in college or university, are carrying a desire to go overseas to serve as a volunteer. Of course most of them may not possess any theological credential yet they can come to this ancient land simple and not complex. Any short-termer, coming for one or two weeks, can travel to Ethiopia with a tourist visa, which usually could last for a month.

For volunteers, say coming to teach languages or music or serving in sports or in construction..., whose service will need over one month's time, they should apply for a 3-month long single-entry business visa from the Ethiopian Embassy or Consulate in their country or city of residence, submitting an invitation letter from an organization registered with the government of Ethiopia. When that 3 months expire, it is possible to extend for another 3 months without having to leave Ethiopia. So all these do look positive. (Note: with the American citizens, under a reciprocal agreement with Ethiopia, they can obtain a 2-year long business visa with multiple entries. Yet the Immigration Bureau here still recommends a proper Work Permit for any foreigner coming for long-term services but not on a business visa.)

Pleading for laborers before the Lord of harvest: If you were to ask Joseph what is the most urgent prayer request here on this field, without a moment of hesitation I will say: "*Plead with our Lord, who is the Lord of harvests, to send laborers into this whitened field of Ethiopia!*" Note I do not say pleading for missionaries as missionaries have been serving in diverse areas like education, medical care, welfare for children, and other charitable or development endeavors. Missionaries serving in these realms have their legitimate roles to play. As our Lord saw multitudes of people scattered like lost sheep without a shepherd, his compassion arose so delivered this instruction to His disciples (**Matt. 9: 37-38**) to plead with Him to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. This plea is in total harmony with His Great Commission given before His departure.

Ethiopia is a ripened field where multitudes after multitudes are heading for an eternity without Christ. In the past 10 to 15 years, we have seen very few new career missionaries, particularly those who are directly involved in His harvest. Can we blame the scantiness of laborers upon our Lord? Never! The problem always lies with us in our slothfulness in pleading for laborers. Is the harvest field here simple and easy? Not at all, in spite of the traditional thick religious atmosphere in this land, the strongholds of the enemy are many and they are deep-rooted in resisting the gospel. Trials and oppositions will keep coming yet seeing millions upon millions are traveling on the broad road leading to destruction our spirits did often grieve!

This 'diploma ordeal' did not happen by chance and I believe it is leading us to what many seasoned servants of our Lord call the prayer of all prayers, which is pleading with the Lord of harvest to eject His laborers into His many harvests worldwide, including the tremendous one right here in Ethiopia. How urgent and unceasing, with fasting, we need to plead for laborers coming to sow the seed of the gospel, the living Word of God which abide forever, and with tears in their eyes! The Apostle Paul is a most prominent example in sowing the seed. And equally important we need laborers, like Timothy and Titus, who water so the living seed will sprout and grow, to make disciples and to teach them to obey everything our Lord commands. Our present perilous days are quite similar, if not much more, to those of Timothy and Titus, when heretical and demonic doctrines abound. Ethiopia is definitely included in this spreading of deadly doctrines like cancer. Let us plead with intensity and sharp focus and enduring faith for laborers who will bring many into His kingdom of light, and will divide the Word of God accurately so to build believers up in sound doctrines, and finally but not least in inflicting much damage to Satan's kingdom of darkness in this land formerly called Abyssinia!



During the 2018 ACM General Assembly we had 3 Chinese families with us, preparing delicious dumpling. Here is a group photo with them before their departure.



Former campers, 4 being in the same family and 2 are their relatives, came to our Camp Site for a fellowship. We keep on praying for them individually!



Our 2017 ACM General Assembly being held on our Camp Site with a special thanksgiving for the 2,194 sq. m Site granted to us free by the City government. Here is a precious group picture together.



An Ethiopian girl with her counterpart a Chinese girl during our 2018 General Assembly held at the rented Ayat house.



Our ChangHe Suzuki, a 10-seater small truck, had the garage 2 main mechanics & 2 young workers with it after a major engine work about 3 months ago. How we desire in the days ahead, our Lord will provide for ACM a suitable medium-size vehicle, such as a Toyota coaster (used one of coaster model 10 years ago from Dubai), capable to seat 25 to 30 campers!



ACM not only serve the boys and girls, but always trying to reach out to their parents and other family members. Here is a nice photo of 2 boy campers with their mother and little sister.



On the 28th of April, the Ethiopian Easter (Fasika) Sunday, a delicious traditional lunch was eaten with Ato. Gashaw, the manager of ACM, and his small family.



Our prospective 6,500 sq. m Site facing east. Note the wooded green areas stretching far and wide. With its diminished sound level and serene scenery, the Site is truly conducive to a **youth camp** endeavor!



Our current 2,194 sq. m Site with the main bldg on the left and the formerly intended red-sand playground on the right. This Site, with its proximity to the main artery road to the Ethiopian north, we plan to develop into a **youth center** ministry.



From the view of 6,500 sq. m Site facing north-west, in spite of the vast Condominium blocks in sight, it still retains a distinct country-side flavor with its rolling hills and mountains!



19 years ago in 2000, on the same location as the left-side photo, with a fenced off area for playing soccer, horse-back riding and others, you could understand why we contracted 6,500 sq. m 5 years later in 2005 for our camping endeavor.



On the same Easter Sunday, in an Orthodox motor-cycle mechanic's home, this photo was taken of the 2 daughters, who have really grown after just a few years. *Do pray, without ceasing, for the millions upon millions in this land that they will come to know Christ the only way to God and salvation!*

Phil 2:13 may aptly serve as an opening for this Newsletter: “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” This Report will go far back to the beginning of ‘Abyssinia Camping Ministry’ (ACM), reviewing its two major milestones, and looking forward for this year of 2017.

ACM began at the turn into the New Millennium: Started small with a Stable and other facilities at the borderline of Addis Ababa about 17 years ago, we, whether foreign missionaries or Ethiopian believers, nevertheless all conceived that our humble site was conducive to camping outreach to young people.

Please refer to the attached ‘Shemson – the Prime Minister’s horse’ written for the Millennium year for your information. Now at ACM we do not breed horse for many years. We will only breed when an order for foal being placed. We are also seeking the Lord’s will about ‘Artificial Insemination’ – purchasing frozen semen of an outstanding Polish Arabian stallion currently residing at UK – at 400 pounds per shipment, non-refundable, for half-Arabian mare such as our only Shemson’s daughter Shemilee.

At the turn of the New Millennium we used to take boys and girls to our Site for horse-back riding, football, archery, netting fish, and hiking..... Plus a Bible time which still remains as the backbone of this Ministry. After these many years, things have changed a lot such as cluster after cluster of Condominiums (i.e. Government built apartment blocks for the mass) shot up all around (the photo with Shemson running on a meadow today being dotted with condominiums in the distant background), no more fish in the stream as being polluted, a heavy-duty six cable power line with towers running within view from our Site, and more and more people moving from the city taking up residence in our area.... In spite of the changing faces of all the surrounding, our Site still retains certain countryside flavor in her distant rolling mountains, the wooded area (being designated the government as ‘Green Area’) and water are still running in the nearby streams.

The first Milestone of ACM in 2005: In early July of 2005 ACM was registered with the Government as a national Christian faith Ministry. As we look back, again our Lord was prompting us through His indwelling Spirit then that this Camping endeavor should be registered national but not foreign. After 12 years in 2017, when many NGO foreign Christian organizations included, are being faced with this trend – increasing difficulty in getting new work permits. We heard that the government has been more lenient with national entities in regard to granting work permits. Our Lord made no mistake in leading ACM into our first Milestone in 2005!

The second Milestone of ACM in 2016: As being reported in a number of updates before, the Lord’s hand was helping enabling us to get through every hurdle that came up throughout the entire process. Just around 9 months of time during September of 2016, ACM had acquired our Title Certificate for 2,194 square meters of land without time limit. It is common in Addis Ababa, whether private homes or organizations, in spending years to get the karta – without which no land could be legally occupied and developed. An Elder of an evangelical church recalled it took them 4 years in finally acquiring the karta! As we look back, we know that God’s invisible hand was helping us every step of the way in response to the prayer of His blood-redeemed children in diverse places!

What about the Sport Complex on the meadow? Many of you have already known that for years we are contemplating another 6,500 sq. meters on the meadow (again refer to Shemson running on the meadow photo) to be used for our sports activities. However we were faced with two big hurdles if pursuing this plot of land from the City government. The 1st hurdle is that to acquire open land free the City government requires a 70% deposit of the total amount to complete the proposed Project. That is to say if 10 millions birrs be

required for the completion of the Sport Complex, the government needs to see 7 millions in our ACM bank A/C or no granting of land.

The 2nd hurdle is even more formidable, which is the requirement to enter an agreement with the government in 'Serving the Community.' (Note: in Ethiopia any 'Serving the Community' agreement with the government, as a rule, falls under Development thus by law no spiritual activities such as Bible or prayer were allowed) Input given us from experienced personnel have been: "be cautious for 'Serving the Community' could be tricky in its requirements down the road..." or "...this could lead to complication rapidly for ACM as a Christian entity.." In short, warnings to us not to compromise our Christian faith for a plot of land free from the City authorities.

Just around February how we thanked our Lord for 2 precious input, of the same nature, from 2 of our ACM members. Both pointed out a new feasible way that instead of pursuing another karta for 6,500 sq. m of land, we can contribute to build a medium-size soccer field on the same meadow, leveling the land properly and erecting 2 solid goals plus surrounding the field with short stone landmark. The local Kebele administration will appreciate this kind of contribution from our Camping Ministry. In this manner, we will be totally free from the two above mentioned big hurdles. The meadow land will always remain under the City government whereas the soccer field will serve the community youth plus of course we at ACM can also use the field from time to time. When God has put a desire in our hearts through His Spirit, He will also bring it to fruition in due course!

Embarking on 'Phrase by Phrase Development': With much patience, we are still waiting for the final outcome of the new Addis Ababa City Master Plan, said to be in its final stage now. When the new Master Plan has emerged, our current Karta will be able to be amended in getting rid of this clause of 'no masonry work permitted'.

With just around 2,200 sq. meters of land on our Site, we will stick realistically to our original goal of serving 100 campers – with facilities to lodge 50 boys and 50 girls. When the karta amendment being done, we will make known our 'Immediate Phrase', which we will set before our Lord for helping us to accomplish fully. Only with the 'Immediate Phrase' fully completed will we embark on another new Phrase. Each Phrase will be geared towards the final goal of serving 100 campers, plus if the Lord so directs to combine our future 'Abyssinia Youth Center' on the same Site of our Youth Camp. At ACM we shall not depart from our long tradition of **'Trusting in the Lord fully'** and steering away from any solicitation of funds.

Pray for laborers: This final heading focuses on the need of God-sent laborers, whether a younger couple to serve as our Programmer (a commitment of at least 3 years) and a young man or woman with a God-endowed love for youth yet also possessing horsemanship in order to head up a riding program. Again a commitment no less than 2 years.

Then pray to our Lord for big brothers and big sisters so vital for all our program whether English or Amharic. With our past endeavor to some nearby churches for volunteers or youth department of denomination yet with little responses. Only our Lord can lead us to the right young man and woman (College age quite desirable) who fear Him and honor and love His word and who can be a living example before the youngsters. Today in Addis Ababa there are too many church young people who are pursuing after prosperity and health and who enjoy the so-called gifts of the Spirit yet so many do not even have a personal assurance of salvation! We never ask the Lord for this sort of laborers. We firmly believe that true laborers, sent by our Lord of harvests in response to the unceasing pleading of His children, will be the key to lasting fruitfulness at ACM!