

REPORT ON: *Ethiopia Mission Network*
DATE: *May 18-20, 2006*
LOCATION: *Trinity United Presbyterian Church,
Santa Ana, CA.*

Attendance

Approximately fifty-five people from the United States, Canada and Ethiopia attended the **Third Annual Meeting of the Ethiopia Mission Network**. Representatives attended from the three presbyteries with partnerships: Susquehanna Valley, NY (WWBS), Washington, PA (SWBS), and Shenandoah, VA (IBS). There were representatives from several of the Unreached People Group Networks or interest groups – Suri, Shekkacho, Arssi-Oromo – and officials and missionaries from the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Others came from ecumenical ministries or committed individual congregations.

The meeting was made much richer with the **addition of nine Ethiopians**: Yonas Yigezu of Illubabor Bethel Synod and Essay Miressa of the Jimma Presbytery, four others now living in North America and serving Ethiopian churches or organizations, an Ethiopian-American author, and two other Ethiopians visiting the U.S. Dorothy Hanson, PCUSA Consultant on AIDS for East Africa to EECMY, also came from Ethiopia for the conference and delivered a **Report from the Bethel Synods Coordination Office and the BSCO Administrative Committee**.

Program Highlights

Dr. Charles van Engen, Professor of Biblical Theology of Mission having taught in the School of Intercultural Studies since 1988 at Fuller Theological Seminary, gave a significant plenary on Thursday morning. Dr. van Engen's presentation was **The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century**. This excellent presentation on missiology was followed by presentations from Yonas Yigezu and Essay Miressa, relating his comments to mission and ministry in Ethiopia. There were a number of incisive questions asked following these presentations to which Dr. van Engen gave insightful responses. This presentation set the context for the remainder of the network meeting.

Jo Ann Griffith, who has retired after teaching at the Bethel Evangelical Secondary School (BESS) in Dembi Dollo for 35 years, attended the meeting and made a presentation on the school. Jo Ann's experiences provided an exceptional resource and it was a joy to hear her insights and perspectives throughout the meeting.

There were other plenary presentations on Microfinance, HIV/AIDS, The Seed Company (Wycliffe Bible Translations), and PCUSA Partnership Developments. Workshops were offered on a wide variety of topics including Muslim/Christian relations, cross-cultural orientation, water projects, money matters, International Justice Missions, hosting Ethiopian guests, education issues, women's realities with HIV/AIDS, Bible translation updates, and unreached people groups. All workshops and interest groups were well attended and enhanced the educational component of the network meeting.

Doug Welch, PCUSA's new Africa Area Coordinator, and Gail Bingham, Program Manager with PCUSA International Health Ministries, both attended the meeting. Doug Welch gave an update on the changes happening in Louisville. Doug's presentation assured the group of the continued support for mission networks, stating that with this reorganization, the role of networks will be more significant to the work of mission for the church. Doug will be supported as Africa Area Coordinator by a group of Regional Liaisons who will have a more focused task within specific regions of Africa. One Regional Liaison is expected to be named giving specific attention to the Sudan and Ethiopia. These positions have not yet been filled and will not be salaried positions.

Surrounded by prayer: Worship highlights included lively morning devotions on Friday, an intense time of prayer for Ethiopia to close Friday night, and a final simple and powerful communion service on Saturday as the climax of the meeting.

Business Highlights Discussed

The Balinjera Planning Team held several meetings during the event. They discussed the BSCO report and finance issues at BSCO, and they began organizing for the 2007 session. There was considerable discussion regarding the support base for BSCO, with PCUSA's unified funding being now exhausted. The team plans to communicate with the BSCO Administrative Committee, offering to work together with the committee toward the long term viability of the facility.

A recommendation was presented that planning team members serve no more than three years consecutively. This noted, it was suggested that each presbytery seek new representatives to begin service for the 2007-2008 session, inviting them to be guests for this year's meetings as they are available.

Doug Sensabaugh and Beverly Norton ended their tenure as co-conveners of the network with the close of this meeting. The Rev. Dr. Barbara Renton, representing Susquehanna Valley Presbytery, will serve as convener for the coming session. Barbara has served in the GAC and has traveled fairly extensively in Ethiopia.

Meeting Location

The 2006 Network meeting was welcomed warmly to the Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Santa Ana, California. Giny Roundy of the Trinity church served as host liaison and involved a group of 25 Trinity volunteers who provided most excellent support throughout the meeting. Their facilities were a splendid forum and allowed easy access for all activities. At the closing of the meeting, those gathered enthusiastically thanked the Trinity congregation and Giny for their wonderful hospitality and encouragement.

The 2007 Ethiopia Mission Network meeting is expected to be held in the Minneapolis area. While details are yet to be worked out, the plan is to meet at Hope Presbyterian Church during the spring season.