

(STATE)

THE CURRENT STATUS OF BETHEL SYNODS COORDINATION OFFICE

First and most of all, I would like to bring you very special greetings from all the five Bethel Synods Presidents and Bethel Synods Coordination office staff in Addis Ababa. It is a great privilege for me to take part in the Ethiopian Mission Network meeting, and I am looking forward to learning from each other.

Having said so, as requested, I am trying to present the current status of the Bethel Synods Coordination office (BSCO) as follows.

I. INTRODUCTION

" Be strong and courageous... for the Lord your God will be with you..."
(Joshua 1:6-7a, 9b, 18)

There were four possible reasons why Joshua might have been afraid of the task ahead of him. (According to Rick Warren, Africa Bible Commentary, pp.258-259)

1/ The people he was to lead. 2/ The land he was to possess. 3/ The man he was to succeed. 4/ The God he was to serve.

For Joshua to accomplish the task God has given him, he will need to be a leader who displays strength and courage. No wonder the words "be strong and courageous ' are repeated three times.

In spite of myriad challenges we encounter, now and then, the Five Bethel Synods need to be strong and courageous. A few years back we lost our dearest friend and coworker, Ato Solomon Nega. That was a big blow not only to the Bethel Synods but also to all partners that closely work with us. Nonetheless, we do not despair or loose hope in God, but continue to serve the Lord our God in many ways. We are so thankful to all our partners who always have prayed for us and supported us in many ways. Most importantly, we give praise and thanks to the Almighty God who thus far has brought us to share his wonderful deeds.

II. BETHEL SYNODS COORDINATION OFFICE

This office has two units that function under its authority. They are Bethel Mekane Yesus School (BMYS) and the guesthouse (upper, lower and white house). Currently, the Office is headed by the acting coordinator (Rev. Teferi Berkassa), and has eight workers. An additional accountant is needed for the work of the coordination office.

The guesthouse serves both national and expatriate personnel, who come from different parts of the globe to serve God in Ethiopia. There are three buildings designated for the purpose. The lower guesthouse is mostly used by expatriates, simply because there is an Internet service and a kitchen to make own food. The upper guesthouse is used by almost

everybody, be it a national or an expatriate. The building that is white painted is known as "*white house*." Some people prefer to stay in the so-called "white house", because it is the basement and so quiet unless someone disturbs. There are eight workers (manager, cooks, cleaners, and, guards), who take care of the guesthouse.

As there is a great need from both within the Mekane Yesus Church and non-members to use the guesthouse for various purposes, we need to add more rooms to meet the needs. There is a plan to build another house, which has ten single bedrooms that can be used by Synod officials and other officials for privacy reasons and work. It is estimated that the building will cost **ETB 255,000.00**. If we could be able to build this new house, there is a possibility of generating more income to the guesthouse.

Bethel Mekane Yesus School, the former Yehiwot Berhan School, solely teaches female students from KG to 12th grade (preparatory). This School is known for its good reputation. Ato Teferi Teressa heads the School, and there are about 85 workers & teachers (permanent and part time teachers) altogether. The School Board looks into issues that need attention and recommends to either the School Management or the Bethel Synods Administration Committee for action.

The Bethel Synods Administration Committee (BSAC) consists of the five Bethel Synods' presidents (Ato Petros Tsanu, President of SWBS -current chairperson; Rev. Yadeta Krita, President of IBS-Member; Rev. Matthew Dailak-Member, President of WGBS-Member; Ato Adak Ojulu, President of EGBS-Member; Rev. Woreti Galalcha, President of WWBS-Member. The Administration Committee meets four times a year, and whenever there is an urgent matter that needs the decision of the Committee an extraordinary meeting is called. There is a common or mutual understanding between the members and as a result, most of a time, decisions are made unanimously.

III. PARTNERSHIP

Except for East and West Gambela Bethel Synods (HEKS assists them in some activities), the rest have partners either in Europe or America. Illubabor Bethel Synod partners with Shenandoah Presbytery, South West Bethel Synod is a partner to Washington Presbytery, and West Wollega Bethel Synod partners with Susquehanna Valley Presbytery. Several projects and programs have been implemented with the support of these partners. This partnership is not a one-way traffic but two ways. It is based on mutual understanding and sharing God's given resources in many ways.

IV. BUDGET

The budget of the Coordination office, of the guesthouse, and Bethel Mekane Yesus School are worked out separately but a consolidated one. The working budget for the BSCO in 2008 is **ETB 442,153.00**, for Bethel Mekane Yesus School **ETB 2,337,902.00**, and for the guesthouse is **ETB 231,652.00**. These units of BSCO get their income from earmarked grants, special gifts, tuition and other related income, and room and lodging. Hence, the total working budget for the fiscal year is **ETB 3,011,707.00**. At this juncture,

we would like to thank all the partners and individuals who take part in supporting the Coordination Office, BMYS, and the guesthouse in their prayers, financially, and other ways.

V. CHALLENGES

There are several challenges we encounter, everyday, as we work in the Mission of God. However, we do not lose hope for the Lord our God is with us. Amongst many, hereunder mentioned are the two major current challenges of BSCO (SWBS, IBS, WWBS, EGBS, WGBS).

5.1 Financial constraints

As mentioned above, each unit of BSCO have its own working budget. Despite the fact, there are occasions that force them not to stick to the working budget as planned. For example: the government of Ethiopia increases the salary of its workers, at all level, from time to time, due to high inflation. In this case, there is no choice for the units and are forced to do the same or do a little. Otherwise the units will lose their workers to the government. This is not only a challenge for BSCO, but for all the five Bethel Synods. Already some Synods like SWBS, WWBS, and EGBS have experienced such an incident. These days, only very few committed employees would like to stay with the Church/Synod and work. As we struggle to overcome this challenge, please pray for us and stay along with us.

5.2 The Old Bethel Movement

As most of you are already aware of, that the Evangelical Bethel Church in Ethiopia was merged with the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, now, known as the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in the late seventies. Since then, we have been working together as one church peacefully and serve communities in our respective areas with the motto of "servicing the whole person." Now after all these years, some individuals who pursue their own interest have started to stir up congregations to follow their footsteps. Except for those who are not active in the church, already excommunicated, disciplined, and backsliders no committed member of the congregation joins them.

Their fields of exercise are the South West Bethel Synod and Illubabor Bethel Synod. Things are not so active in Western Wollega Bethel Synod and the two Gambela Bethel Synods, as it is in others. Their propaganda is that "***Bethel Church had never been merged with the Mekane Yesus Church, but made a fellowship. Therefore, now we had enough with the Mekane Yesus Church, its time to take back our properties and start a national church by reviving the Old Bethel Church.***"

This is another big challenge for us, as we Bethel Synods, still retain the name "**Bethel**" in our constitution and use it. It is very confusing for Bethel Synods congregations to

VII.CONCLUSION

Last but not least, we would like to thank all our partners and individuals who have participated and still participating in the multifaceted activities of the Synods and the Coordination office in one-way or another.

In spite of all the challenges we encountered within and without, God has been caring for us in all our daily walk of life and in the church work. It is written in Zechariah 2:8, "God cares for His people and describes them as the apple of His eye."

May the Lord of Hosts bless the Ethiopian Mission Network meeting abundantly!

Respectfully submitted,

Petros Tsanu (Mr.)
Chairperson, BSCO Administrative Committee