

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 six 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 many challenges we encounter, now and then, the six Bethel Synods need to be strong and courageous. 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 coordinator (Rev. Teferi Berkassa), and has 10 workers.

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. 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 12 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 was 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. Praise the Lord we were able to complete the building last year and currently it is in use. We are very happy to inform that since last February 2015 we have Wi-Fi Internet service for our guests. The Manager of the guest House is Wzo Asnakech Regassa.

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. according to the new education policy of the country the school is divided in to three divisions, that is KG wzo Abaynesh Mihirete acting Coordinator, Primary school 1-8th Ato Negeri Regassa Director, and high school 9-12th Ato Samuel Tadasse heads the School, and there are about 85 workers & teachers (permanent and part time teachers) altogether. Currently we have 1200 students this year. 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 (BSCO-AC) consists of the six Bethel Synods' presidents (Kes Tariku Tolessa, President IBS, current BSCO-AC, Chairperson; Kes Chali Yosef, President of WWBS-Member; Rev. Ding Gach-President WGBS, Vice chairperson Kes Endiriays Essey , President of SWBS member Ato Okelo Oluch President EGBS and member, Kes Hailu Abebe President of JBS-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.

EECMY-BSCO mainly serves the six EECMY-Bethel synods. According to September 2014 statistics of the EECMY, the total membership of six Bethel Synods exceeds 1.6 million (30% of that of EECMY).

- ❖ Established congregations -1815
- ❖ Preaching places -more than 1000
- ❖ Full time pastors -782
- ❖ Full time evangelists- 1210
- ❖ Volunteer evangelists (lay preachers/teachers, etc)-more than 5,000

Program Coordination Office At BSCO.

EECMY-BSCO has program coordination office headed by Ato Petros Tsanu as program coordinator. Some programs like LCCBP, TMMP and CBS/RLP started in 2007. CB/HRD Projects was designed by BSCO program Coordinator, launched in 2010 and phasing out in 2015.

Achievement of the Programs since 2007

- **Low cost Church Building program (LCCBP)**- 553 new church buildings were constructed from 2007-2014.
- **Tent Maker-Ministry program (TMMP)** - 2889 evangelists and pastors (and very few leaders) participated in this program from 2007-2014.
- **Church Basic School/Rural Literacy program (CBS/RLP)**- started with only 30 schools in five synods but today has grown in to 120. Excluding JBS, the statistics of the past years (2007-2014) show that **26,520** adults and children students have been completed a-one year basic education. The number of female students have enrolled to basic education is increasing from year to year. For example, number of female students enrolled to 2013/2014 CBS/RL program was **3425** and out of these **27869 (81%)** completed a- one –year basic education; while **3398** male students were registered and **26657 (78%)** completed a one – year basic education.
- **Capacity Building/ Human Resource Development Project(CB/HRDO)-2010-2014**

This program was designated for five years (2010-2014) and presented to The Out Reach Foundation for funding in November 2009 and it was accepted and has been funded by BLI during the whole implementation period and now phasing out

We request your prayers and your effort to look for means and ways to support his project in the future for the glory of God and for the benefit of God’s people.

Achievements of CB/RHDP at Synods Level

- ❖ 122 various trainings, workshops and/or seminars were organized and conducted by the Synods.
- ❖ 18,809 participants (lay leaders, evangelists, pastors, other employees of the synods) took- part in those trainings.
- ❖ 245 evangelists, pastors and lay workers have pursued their studies at Synod Bible schools, regional Seminaries, MYS, EGST, private and Government Universities and colleges.

Programs /Project phasing out- Church Basic School Rural Literacy Program (CBS/RLP) and Capacity Building/Human Resource Development (CB/HRDP) in 2015.

Programs continuing – Low Cost Church Building Program and Tent-Maker Ministry programs.

III. PARTNERSHIP

Except for Western Gambela Bethel Synod and Jima Bethel Synods the rest have partners in America. Illubabor Bethel Synod partners with Shenandoah Presbytery, South West Bethel Synod is a partner to Washington Presbytery, and Western Wollega Bethel Synod partners with Susquehanna Valley Presbytery. East Gambela Bethel Synod with Olivet Presbyterian Church, 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 working budget of EECMY-BSCO and its units for the fiscal year 2015 is as following.

1. Bethel Synods Coordination Office.....	ETB	1,341,600.00
2. Bethel Synods Guest House	ETB	1,622,600.00
3. Bethel Mekane Yesus School.....	ETB	5,569,330.00
Total Budget..	ETB	<u>8,533,530.00</u>

V. CHALLENGES

There are several challenges we encounter, everyday, as we work in the Mission of God. However, we do not loose 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 and JBS).

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 loose their workers to the government. This is not only a challenge for BSCO, but for all the six 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.

VI. VISION

These days, everybody, including partners talk about being financially self-support in every aspect of life. With this respect, the six Bethel Synods are working hard to developing income generation schemes (IGS) in their own respective synods.

Besides, the six Bethel Synods have a vision to develop income generation schemes so that the BSCO (WWWS, SWBS, IBS, EGBS, WGBS, JBS) become self-reliant and emancipate itself from dependency syndrome.

The Bethel Synods Coordination Office (BSCO) has set a package of financial plan that comprises the following categories.

Business Plan

Business plan is mainly considered at the Center here in Addis Ababa.

6.1 At the first place it takes into consideration those properties under BSCO that are underutilized or economically not benefiting. In this regard the first commodity to be turned into use is BSCO's land property within its compound. The plan is to have a **multifunctional building built** on the empty sites of the compound. Accordingly, a schematic plan of a building that worth **ETB 10,000,000 million** has been designed and funds are being solicited for it.

A preliminary feasibility study has been made on this line. Thus, when the buildings are ready, BSCO will be able to earn more than **ETB 500,000.00** net incomes, yearly. This would enable BSCO to provide financial support for synods programs.

The envisioned building will have **guestrooms, offices for leasing out, and spaces for small-scale supermarket and pharmacies, etc.**

6.2 Other business plans such as **opening up modern café and small trade centers** are thought as possibilities.

6.3 **Capacitate the Bethel Synods guesthouse** so that it would extend its services beyond the level it has now. These for example include meal services, building additional guestrooms and the like.

6.4 **Renovating the old Bethel Mekane Yesus School building** for the school use and also for income scheme God willing.

We believe that local and overseas partners of the Bethel Synods participate in making this vision realized.

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 as we continue to participate in His Mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Teferi Berkessa(Kes)
EECMY-BSCO, Coordinator
April, 2015