

mission  
from Canada  
to Canada  
in Canada

# Greetings from the Jacobsons

June 2017



## Where did I see God at work on my recent trip to Ethiopia (April 29 – May 20)?

1. Originally, I expected to arrive just in time for the final workshop for Ato Kursie's DMin project. A last minute schedule change moved the workshop from my first week in Ethiopia to my last week, which was actually better timing all around. I was able to spend significant time



the first week with Ato Kursie, helping him to plan the workshop and prepare for the final stage of data collection and visioning the next stage of developing leaders to lead like Jesus within the denomination, for which the project merely lays the foundation. A highlight was the signing of the [Leaders Covenant](#) and presentation to the zonal General Secretaries of their framed copies. During the second week, Ato Kursie was able to attend an important conference on the persecuted church in Dallas while I was able to go to Kambatta.

2. I was able to spend three days interviewing colleagues of my parents in Kambatta related to the project to write a book entitled *We Want To See Jesus: Stories of Early Mothers and Fathers of the Kambatta Church, 1952–1965*. It was a blessing to be reminded of how God had been at work through my parents, other missionaries, and their Ethiopian colleagues to build a vibrant church that today numbers over 650 churches, representing the largest portion of the 83% of the Kambatta population who identify as Protestants. It was a blessing to be able to travel around with a



colleague, Ato Berhanu, a Kambattan who is the national coordinator of all the 150 Amharic Bible schools and author of 15 books and who has been committed since last year to helping with this project. It was amazing to be able to enlist the capable help of Ato Tamiru, a younger colleague of my parents who is also an historian of the Kambatta church and an author and a very key resource person. And I saw God at work in the encouragement and support of a team



of former students and colleagues, now church leaders in the national office or theological educators, who will work with us on the project and contribute insights as second and third generation Kambattan church leaders.

3. Planning for the continuation of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language project came along nicely. A team of enthusiastic and highly qualified people from Canada came together, willing to go to Ethiopia in August to mentor Ethiopian teachers of English in three one-week English camps. I was able to plan with the Theological Education Coordinator and meet with the leaders



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of two of the colleges to discuss arrangements and view facilities. Repeatedly I was told of the need for improved English in the ten ministry training colleges. Since 103 Amharic diploma level Bible schools also want to use the curriculum that we are offering, we are planning a special course at each camp for Amharic Bible school teachers who are degree holders from an English-medium college so that they can teach an English course in their schools.

4. A year ago as we were planning for the annual Amharic Bible School teachers' in-service training, we were planning to somehow address the serious financial challenges that the schools, teachers, and students face. As planning progressed, through Pastor Lou Geense of the World Partners program of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada, a connection was made with Dan Wiens, a World Partners missionary serving in South Africa who works with a program called Farming God's Way (<http://www.farming-gods-way.org/> ). As Lou was in

Ethiopia to hand over his role and other ministries to John DMin cohort of four people project), Dan was able to join vision of what God could do by curriculum and training to the certificate). We look toward church, and community crops that produce yields of 3,



in the Farming God's Way pilot project Cressman (a member of Ato Kursie's and able to encourage Kursie in his the team and both catch and cast a introducing the Farming God's Way 150 Amharic Bible schools (diploma and the day when the teachers, students, the members that they train will be having 5 and even 10 times what they are used

to getting. This training seems to be God's answer to the need that we observed of making the schools more sustainable as well as equipping the students with better income generation skills, enabling them to be bi-vocational ministers. When we tried to determine what proportion of the Amharic Bible school students would find the training relevant, we laughed at the response at one school: "All of our students are farmers except the pharmacist – but he also has a farm." I don't think there is anything that could possibly be more relevant to their financial needs. But Farming God's Way is as much about making disciples as it is about improving living conditions. It will fit well into the training ministries of the church where people are being equipped to both grow as followers of Jesus and to make disciples.

One unexpected adventure provided me with a little life lesson. A landslide on the Bulki Mountain road turned it into a river of mud, trapping us on the mountain. Bulki was the southern-most point of our journey that included visiting 13 Amharic Bible Schools and 4 English-based ministry training colleges. The climb/mule ride up Bulki Mountain was legendary in earlier missionary circles (families like the Ratzlaffs, Adams, Hunters, and Fahnstocks were early Bulki pioneers). We watched for hours as bulldozers pushed masses of mud over the edge of the mountain.



The rains seemed to have arrived early and with the strong potential of future landslides it didn't seem to me that there was going to be any limit to the work the bulldozers would have to do. Each generation faces its own set of challenges, but like the little Amharic Bible School at the top of the mountain that has been faithfully training leaders for the Bulki area churches for the past 60 years and like the bulldozers with their seemingly endless task, we are called to be faithful to the work that is set before us. There will be a reward. Meanwhile, I'm not an engineer, but I am trying to engage with the question, "How do we develop leaders for the church so as to minimize the risk of spiritual landslides?"

Thank you for your prayers and partnership,

*Tim & Lorna Jacobson*