

## **The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)**

The mission of the EECMY is to actively participate in God's Mission. She has been called by the Triune God to proclaim Christ to His people in diverse social and cultural contexts. The EECMY believes and professes that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments are the Holy Word of God and the only guiding source and infallible method/doctrine of all the Church's principles and practices.

The EECMY believes that all power in the Church belongs primarily and exclusively to the head of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, all powers and duties exercised by the Church are committed to her for the furtherance of the Gospel through the Word and the Sacraments. She, therefore, lives and acts to fulfill the Great Commission. Her fundamental objectives and functions have been declared in the Church's Constitution and Bylaws.

In order to nurture her members and reach out to unreached areas both within Ethiopia and elsewhere, the Doctrinal Basis shall be her guiding principle.

The Church has a deep concern, not only for the spiritual needs of a person, but also for his/her physical needs. Her motto of service is "Serving the Whole Person," better known as, Holistic Ministry.

### **EECMY Ministries**

- Evangelistic Outreach Ministry
- Diakonia Ministry
- Women's Ministry Coordinating Office
- Family Ministry
- Children & Youth Department
- University Student Ministry
- Christian Education and Theology Ministry
- Bible Translation & Language Development Ministry
- Christian-Muslim Relations Program

### **Special Units**

- Development and Social Services Commission
- International Mission Society
- Peace Office
- Yemisirach Dimts Communication Services
- Mekane Yesus Seminary
- School for the Deaf
- Pension and Insurance Board Office

### **Ecumenical Relationships**

The EECMY supports the idea that all Christian communities are working for the same goal and believes that she has to contribute something as well as to gain from worldwide Christian communities. Therefore, EECMY became a member of the Lutheran World Federation in 1963 (although the Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Congregation was a member from 1957), a member of the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1974 and of the World Council of Churches in 1979. She joined the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as of 2000 and there has been very good relationship with these Church organizations all along.

The EECMY has a good working relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church and other Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia. She is also a founding member of the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE) and the Joint Relief Partnership (JRP), all operating in Ethiopia. She is also making contact with the leadership of the Islamic Supreme Council of Ethiopia to create a healthy relationship.

### **Partners**

- Swedish Evangelical Mission
- Church of Sweden
- Norwegian Lutheran Mission
- Norwegian Missionary Society
- Lutheran Free Church of Norway
- Danish Evangelical Mission
- Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission
- Finnish Lutheran Mission
- Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Germany)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Presbyterian Church of the United States of America

The EECMY also cooperates with the LWF-DWS Field Office and Bread for the World.

## Membership Statistics for 2009

In 2009 there were:

- 6,644 established congregations
- 2,818 preaching places
- 21 synods
- 5,279,822 members (an increase of 1,246,409 members in the 6 years from 2003 to 2009)

## Brief History of EECMY

At the turn of the 19th Century, Ethiopian Christians began proclaiming the Gospel with the help of Lutheran and Presbyterian missionaries in Ethiopia. From these joint efforts the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) was instituted as a national Church on January 21, 1959.

In the 1970s the EECMY developed the theme, "Serving the Whole Person," later on often quoted and referred to as Holistic Ministry. This has been throughout the years a guiding principle for all Church work, be it evangelism or development. The concern is not only for the spiritual need of a person, but also for the physical and human needs.

At the end of 2009, the EECMY had 6,644 established congregations and 2,818 preaching places in 21 Synods, one Work Area and one Parish (Galana Abaya). There are 2,061 pastors, 2,728 evangelists and some 300,000 voluntary persons actively involved in the mission work of the Church. The EECMY has 5,279,822 baptized and 2,465,637 communicant members. This growth has made the EECMY the largest Lutheran Church in Africa.

For more information on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus visit their website at:

[www.eecmy.org](http://www.eecmy.org)

Or contact their office:

EECMY Central Office, P.O. Box 2087, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Phone: 251-11-5533293

[eecmyco@eecmy.org](mailto:eecmyco@eecmy.org)

## Building the Relationship

Throughout these past nine months there has been a constant flow of information between the leaders of the EECMY and the NALC, strengthening our understanding and deepening our relationship. We responded to the EECMY's invitation to attend the Mission Conference and the International Theological and Missions Conference for Pastors in Addis Ababa with a delegation of 15 pastors, staff, theologians and laity. There we were able to engage in face to face meetings with leaders at all levels including seminary faculty, discussing the authority of scripture, faithful and historic interpretation of the scriptures, theology, mission, evangelism, our common confessional heritage, the nature of healthy church relationships, as well as EECMY's strained relationship with the ELCA that may soon end. Several of the members of our delegation were featured presenters and preachers who were well received by leaders and pastors of EECMY. We were also able to experience and understand their mission-focused ecclesiology and structures.

In addition to our conversations in Ethiopia we have had the benefit of one of our own staff who grew up in the church in Ethiopia and received part of his training from their seminary, Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba. We also have been able to continue our dialog with other Oromo pastors and lay leaders throughout the United States as we develop relationships with those congregations.

Following our Convocation, Rev. Berhanu Ofga'a, General Secretary of the EECMY, met with Bishop Bradosky to discuss a strategy to implement the next steps in our relationship, should this agreement be ratified. The EECMY will be voting to approve a similar resolution as they meet later this year. They are looking forward to a mutual celebration of this full communion agreement.