

# GOD IS ON THE MOVE IN ETHIOPIA!

## The Growth

The largest Lutheran body in the world is also the most rapidly growing body of Lutherans in the world, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). They are presently about 9 million in membership, over 50% larger than a decade ago. They're making plans for when they number 30 million. Our Lord is doing incredible things in this country.

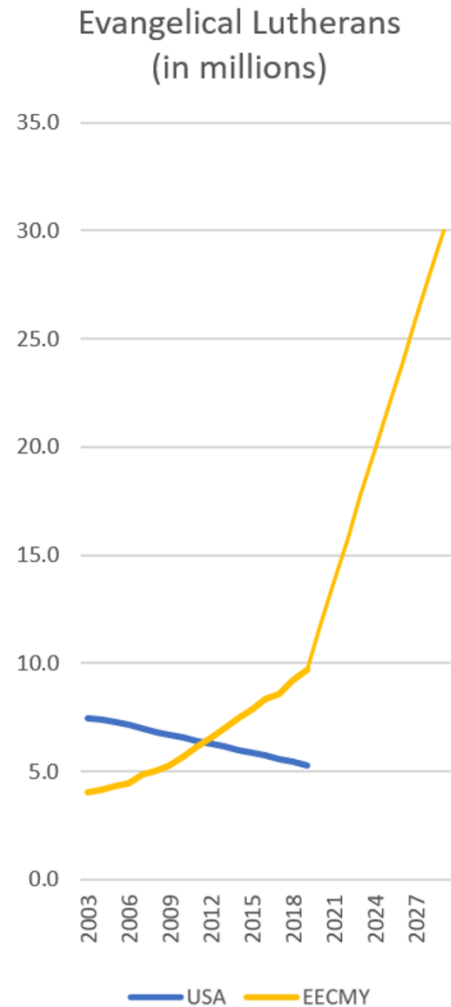
The implications are staggering. Besides the huge growth in Ethiopia, the EECMY is sending out missionaries throughout Africa and the Middle East. They have become a center of global Lutheran-Christianity. It is a Pentecost time for the Church!

One of the key groups in the EECMY is its largest seminary, the Mekeane Yesus Seminary. The seminary is located in downtown Addis Ababa. Under the leadership of Dr. Bruk Ayele, the seminary is working hard to train pastors and evangelists and missionaries for this incredible ministry.

## The Challenges

But all of this also provides challenges.

1. The EECMY is critically short of trained pastors. There is presently only 1 Master of Divinity trained pastor for every 3,000 members of the EECMY. There aren't enough pastors as the church is having trouble keeping up with its own growth.
2. In addition, there is a tremendous need for Bible translation in Ethiopia. There are over 80 languages in Ethiopia and about half of the languages don't have a translation of the Bible.
3. And finally, there is a need for more financial independence for the seminary. In years past, the seminary had been heavily dependent upon the churches in Europe and North America. As those church bodies have declined, so has the support. The need for long-term self-sustainability is crucial to continuing growth.



## The Vision

All of this has given rise to an exciting venture at the Mekane Yesus Seminary. The Seminary is partnering with Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) to construct a new building on the campus which will benefit both the work of the seminary and LBT.



Estimated Completion 2022

The seminary is located on a valuable piece of real estate in a prime business district in Addis Ababa. The desirable location provides the opportunity to construct a multi-function building. Construction is well underway to erect a 6-floor building that will be used for variety of purposes. The bottom floors of the building will be leased commercially, providing income for the seminary. When complete, the building is projected to generate a minimum of \$225,000 per year. This is a huge step, a "game changer" in the words of Dr. Bruk, in moving the seminary toward financial self-sufficiency.

Some of the other floors of the building will be used by Lutheran Bible Translators. 34 students are already in a program preparing them for Bible translation. Finally, the rest of the floors will be used by the seminary for a

variety of needs – offices, classroom space, guest rooms. The building allows the seminary to continue its growth and outreach.

The project is a win-win-win project. The seminary grows its work, LBT grows its work, and the seminary moves to more financial self-sufficiency. It is an incredible model, a model we hope will also be used in other locations and countries.

### **The Work Is Happening!**

Construction of the new building began in April of 2020. All 6 floors have already been erected, the work is actually ahead of schedule. There have been challenges, of course, but the construction quality has been excellent. The emerging building has become a symbol of hope for the seminary and the EECMY in the midst of the global pandemic. It is anticipated that construction will be complete in the spring of 2022.



Under Construction. June 2021

### **The NALC**

So where does the NALC fit in with all of this? The answer is, right smack in the mist of it! The EECMY is the only body with a full-communion relationship with the NALC. LBT is a mission partner with the NALC. Our NALC members are praying for this and financially supporting this. Even more, a team called the “Mekane Yesus Seminary Advancement Team” has been convened to support and assist this work. The team is composed of people from the NALC, LCMS, LBT and Mekane Yesus Seminary. A new group of NALC pastors has also been convened to help champion the project.

### **What is next?**

Two needs lie ahead in completing this work.

First, prayer support. Many people are praying for this project, we’d like even more. We want to share the invitation to pray for this incredible ministry.

Second, financial support. The Seminary Advancement Team is working hard to complete the funding for this work. The overall cost of the project is \$3.8 million. By the grace of God, \$2.9 raised or pledged. \$900,000 remains to complete the project.

### **Conclusion**

God is on the move in Ethiopia! This project is part of that movement. When complete, this project will significantly help raise up future pastors, evangelists and translators. The seminary will be moving forward with their goal of self-sustainability. The global Evangelical-Lutheran Christian movement will be strengthened. God’s kingdom will be advanced, reaching countless people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Again, the goal is to have the building finished, functioning, and paid for by this coming spring 2022, the same year as the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther translating the New Testament into German. One of the plans is to celebrate this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a dedication service in the new building. We are looking to a grand celebration with solid NALC participation.

If you would like more information about this project, or would like to share in this project, please contact either Pastor John Conrad at [jtcswede@gmail.com](mailto:jtcswede@gmail.com) or Pastor Mark Braaten at [mbraaten@oslctyler.org](mailto:mbraaten@oslctyler.org), NALC pastors working with this.

**Tax-deductible contributions can be made to “Lutheran Bible Translators”, P.O. Box 789, Concordia, MO 64020. Note “Seminary Building” on check.**

Lutheran Bible Translators is a recognized ministry of the NALC. You can learn more about their ministry at [lbt.org](http://lbt.org). The Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus is a full communion partner of the NALC. You can learn more about the Mekane Yesus Seminary at [mekaneyesusseminary.org](http://mekaneyesusseminary.org). You can learn more about the EECMY at [eecmy.org](http://eecmy.org).