



Sagalee Abdii

A Periodic Newsletter of

Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church of Minnesota

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1. Editors’ Note: “Those Who Keep Waiting Upon the LORD Will Renew Their Strength”

(Isaiah 40:31)

By Admasu Simeso

This verse was the headline of editorial note of our publication Sagalee Abdii Issue of November 2015. We decided to use it in the current issue as well, as it is very relevant in view of the situation that our church went through over the last couple of years.

Our current issue briefly covers quite an extended timespan not as a news but just to put on record for future history. We touched upon what our church went through over two years, starting from October 2017 to September 22, 2019. In this issue also we covered our Thanksgiving celebration of 2019, observation of the beginning of the Advent Season on Sunday, 12/01/2019, (the waiting for the coming of the Lord, the Prince of Peace), celebration of His Birth on 12/24/2019, Christmas Eve and welcomed the New Year, 2020 on 12/31/2019 at midnight. It also covers our Christmas and New Year Conference, election and installation of our new Church Council members and several other topics from our church and other topics of interest.

As many people who love and care about this church and also those who think otherwise know, our church endured and went through a lot of challenges over two years, (October 2017 to September 2019); went through a lot of unnecessary turmoil; lost two years of our God given precious time, engaged in accusing and tearing down one another in the sanctuary where we were supposed to worship the Lord together. But in God's miraculous way we survived and continue "to wait patiently Upon Him" for where He is going to lead us next.

Here, our intention is not to dwell on the past, what we went through but just to say how sad we were/are that brothers and sisters in Christ were divided for no apparent reason whatsoever. Thus, we note this only for the sake of history, if we could learn something from our experiences and not to repeat the same mistake in the future.

We are always thankful to the Lord in humility that our church, with His Grace, has been exemplary and a source of pride for many of our members and friends far and near, at the same time an envy for the devil. While we are sad that we had to go through all that we went through we are also giving thanks for the unexpected end of the whole episode peacefully. We are saying this because considering what we had gone through and endured it could have ended differently or still dragging on. It is beyond our understanding why it started in the first place and how we all behaved in the House of the Lord while we all passionately profess our strong Christian faith which taught us humility, respect for the House of the Lord, His Church, peace and goodwill towards one another and everyone else.

We very much regret that our church split again, (the first one in 2012 on the same issue) and our members dispersed; some quitting going to church at all, others still pondering what to do next while some must have started a new church. The part that we regret about the most is that most of the people who ended up leaving their church of at least two decades did not have the full understanding of why they had to leave. Regrettably, what happened had happened and we all have to move on with our Christian calls, to shine the

light of the Gospel of our Lord in humility. We do not need to dwell on the past, on what had happened; we do not need to hold grudges and bitterness against anyone but continue to trust and worship the Lord who watches over every one of us, who knows our hearts and motives in and out. God's Grace is central to our Lutheran confession and His grace is abundant for everyone who believes in Him, in Truth and Spirit. Therefore, we do Not need to fight for His Grace is sufficient for everyone and it is free, instead pray for one another that God brings us back to our senses!

As we had celebrated Christmas, the Birth of the Prince of Peace welcomed the New Year 2020, we should live for peace and "goodwill" towards one another, always keeping in mind the Chorus of the angels, the heavenly host from above the *manger* the Son of God's first crib that He was laid down in it as an infant. "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, peace on earth and goodwill among people*". Luke 2:14. Peace and goodwill among our people, our churches and communities!

"The peace of the Lord be with us all; our church, our people, the Land of Our Birth and this Land that welcomed us".

This we would like to close with our church theme of the year, 2020, taken from Philippians 3:13, "...forgetting those things which are behind (including our turmoil of 2 years) and reaching forward to those things which are ahead"; Keep Waiting upon the LORD to Renew our Strength in Him and the sign we have already seen. ("Sagalee Abdii, in English means "Voice of Hope".)

II. *Amantii Tokkoo fi Maqaa Baay'ee*

By Pastor Wondimu Legesse Sonessa



Waa'ee jireenya haafuura keenya yommuu yaadnu, yeroo baay'ee waldootni Kristiyaanaa baay'achaa adeemuu isaanii fi waldaan nuyi miseensa ishee taane immoo warra kaan irra caalaa kan maqaa gaarii qabduu fi beekamtuu ta'uun ishee miira keenya ho'isee nu gammachiisuu danda'a. Gama kaaniin immoo akkuma barri geeddaramaa adeemuun amantootni "abdiin waamichaa" inni isaan itti waamaman tokkicha ta'uu, akkasuumas "gooftaan tokko, amantiin tokko, cuuphaan tokko" (Efesoon 4:4-5) ta'uu dagataa adeemu.

Kun immoo amantiin dhugaa uumuuf jecha akka obbollooni wal irraa cabsatanii waldoota ijaaruutti yeroo fi bara isaanii dabarsan godha. Kanaaf har'a waldaan Kristiyaanaa amantoota maqaa baay'ee moggaafachuudhaan waliin dorgomaas, wal gargaaraas "abdiin waamichaa" sana irratti xiyyeeffatanii wangeela lallaban keessaan, biyya lafaa kana irratti hojjechaa jirti. Waldaan Kristiyaanaa amma iyyuu galma isheedhaaf kaa'ametti adeemaa jirti malee adeemsa ishee hin xumurre. Amma iyyuu biyya lafaa keessa jirti malee biyya waaqa irraa keessa miti. Waldaan kristiyaanaa "abdiin waamichaa" sana bira

ga'uuf kallattii itti adeemaa jirtu beekuunii fi geeggeessitoota kallatti Waaqayyo isheetti agarsiisaa jiru addaan baafatanii beekan qabaachuun gufannaa ishee mudatuun utuu hin danqamin fiigicha ishee itti fufuun murteessaa dha. Hundumaa irra caalaa waldaa Kristiyaanaatti kan miidhama godaannisa ta'ee hafu fidu, "amantiin" kennaa Waaqayyoo qofa malee kan nuyi tattaaffii keenyaan qabaachuu dandeenyu akka hin taane dagachuu amantootaa dha. Amantii isa Waaqayyo namaaf kennutti quufuu dadhabuun amantiin isuma tokkicha sana maqaa baay'een waamuu irra darbee amantiin dhugaa uumuuf nu hin gargaaru.

Amantiin dhugaa iddoo namni barbaadee iijbaatee akka argamu Macaafa Qulqulluu keessaa ragaa baay'eetu jira. Yesus Qifirnaahomitti kan inni, "Ani Israa'el keessatti illee amantiin guddaa akkasii gonkuma hin argine" (Luq 7:9) jedhee guddaa itti gammadee simate kan akkamii ture? Amantiin "akkasii" angafa dhibbaa waa'ee Yesuus waan nama irraa dhaga'e qofaa beeku keessatti argame. Namichi kun Yihudoota biratti nama gaarii ta'uu isaa malee nama amantiin qabu ta'uun isaa hin beekamu. Innis ofii isaatii amantiin fi qulqullummaa Yesuusitti isa dhi'eessuuf ga'aa ta'e akka hin qabnetti kan of-ilaalu ture. Kanaaf Yesuus "ati bantii mana koo jala lixuun anaaf hin ta'u" (Luq 7:4-7) jedheen. Amantiin "akkasii" dubartii lammii Sooriyaa kutaa biyyaa Fiinqee turte, kan waa'ee Yesuus oduu "dhageessee," intala ishee hafuura hamaa irraa akka fayyisuuf, mandara Xiirrositti gara isaa "dhuftee miilla isaatti kufte" keessatti argame (Maarqos 7:24-30). Dubartitti afaan Griikii dubattu kana namoonni qomoo ormaati ishee dhaan jedhan jedhu; gooftaan Yesuus "buddeena ijoolloota sarootaaf darbachuun ba'eessa miti" (Mar 7:27) ishee dhaan jedhe. Deebiin ishee "anis akkasumattan of yaada" waan jette fakkata (Mar 7:28). Yesus dubbii ishee keessatti amantiin argatee dubbii hafuura hamaa intala ishee keessaa baasuu dubbatee "nagaatti dhaqi" jedhee ishee geggeesse.

Macaafni qulqulluun akka dhugaa nuuf ba'utti, amantiin dhugaa inni Yesuus simatu isa namni of keessatti argee mirkaneeffate, yookaan namni biraa isa keessatti argee mirkaneesseef miti. Amantiin dhugaa inni Waaqayyo biratti fudhatamaa ta'e, isa

Yesuus lafa namni “amantiin achi hin jiru” jedhee dhiisee bira darbeetti yookaan nama namni “amantii hin qabdu” jedhee irraa gore keessatti argatuu dha.

Seenaa waldaa Kristiyaanaa isa darbe beekuun waldaa gara shaakala hafuuraa waldaa ishee jalqabaatti deebisu (Restorationism), tajaajiltoota keenya “ergamootaa fi raajota” jennee maqaa tajaajiltootni waldaa ishee jalqabaa keessa turan ittiin waamamaniin muuduuf nu barbaachisa miti. Kan moggaasa kana ofumaan ofii kennanii yeroodhaaf gabaan daldala isaanii baay’ee ho’aa jira. Haa ta’u malee, seenaa waldaa Kristiyaanaa keessatti erga duuka-buutotni Yesuus “jalqaba duraa Anxokiyaatti ‘Kristiyaanota’ jedhamanii waamaman” (HoE11:26) jalqabee hamma har’aatti “Kristiyaanota” jedhamuu caalaa maqaan amantootni ittiin waamamuun ulfina Waaqayyooof kennu hin jiru. Maqaan kun jalqaba tuffii fi qoqqobbii duuka-buutota Yesuus irraan ga’uuf yaadamee moggaafame. Waaqayyo garuu warruma maqaa tuffatamaa kanaan waamaman keessaan hojii fayyisuu isaa biyya lafaa keessatti hojjechuu itti fufee jira. Iccitiin Kristiyaanummaa maqaa namoonni ittiin nu waaman utuu hin ta’in maqaa nuyi Yesuusii ittiin beeknu dha. Yesuus mandara Qiisaariyaa Filiphos keessatti bartoota isaatiin, “namoonni ilma namaatiin eenyu jedhu? . . . Isinoo eenyu naan jettu?” (Mat 16:13-15) jedhee kan inni gaafatee fi deebii Simoon Phexros, “Ati Masiihicha, ilma Waaqayyoo jiraataa ti” (Mat 16:16) jedhe irraa waan tokko baranna. Innis, lafa namoonni Yesuus Kristoos Masiihichi, ilma Waaqayyoo jiraataa fi gooftaa ta’uu isaa beekanii amanan jiran, achi waldaan Kristiyaanaa jirti. Yesuusii beekun fi amanuun immoo “ayyaana” Waaqayyootiin yoo olii namaatti mul’ifame malee hin danda’amu.

Yesuus Kristostu du’a mo’ee ka’ee, gara Waaqaatti olba’ee amma mirga abbaa isaa taa’ee jira. Nuyi waldaa Kristiyaanaa ishee har’aa, ishee “amantii tokko fi maqaa baay’eedhaan beekamtu, keessa asuma lafa irra jirra. Kaayyoon “Tokkittii qulqullooftuu waldaa Kristiyaanaa ergamootaatti” amanuu keenyaa hamma Yesuus deebi’ee dhufee nu fudhatutti, tokkummaa amantii eeguuf amanamummaa dhaan tajaajiluuf malee shaakala hafuuraa keenya gara kan waldaa Kristiyaanaa ishee jalqabaatti deebisuu

(Restorationism) yookaan immoo waldaa waaqa irraa, ishee mudaan tokko illee irraa hin mul’anne (Perfectionism) ijaaruu miti. Kan nu barbaachisu waldaa jireenya lafa kana irraa balfitee, gubbaa waaqa keessaatti of ilaaltu ta’uu utuu hin taanee, waldaa ishee hawaasa gidduutti of ilaaltee, amma Kristoos deebi’ee dhufee ishee simatutti amanamummaa dhaan wangeela lallabdu taanee argamuu dha. Gaafa Yesuus deebi’ee nu fudhachuu dhufu maqaa keenyaan utuu hin taane amantii keenyaan adda baasee nu waama. Luqaas 18:8 gubbaatti Yesuus, “[H]aa ta’u iyyuu malee, ilmi namaa yommuu dhufu amantii lafa irratti argataa laata?” jedha. Gaaffiin kun waa’ee kootii fi waa’ee keessaniif gaafatame. Akka ani hubadhutti, waldaa gadi of-qabdee hawaasa gidduutti amanamummaa dhaan maqaa koo beeksiftu nan argadhaa laataa? jechuu isaa ti.

Eeyyee, maqaan gaariin fi hojiin gaariin karaa amantiin keenya namoota warra kaan biratti ittiin mul’achuu qabu dha. Garuu isaan kun wangeela Kristoosiif akka ta’utti jiraachuu irraa maddu malee, wangeelatu maqaa gaarii fi hojii gaarii irraa madda miti. Yesuus yommuu lammaffa deebi’ee dhufu maqaa keenya isa gurguddaa, maqaa waldaa keenyaa isa adduunyaa irratti beekamaa, yookaan maqaa saba keenyaa isa guddaa, yookaan immoo dubbii gurguuddaa afaan keenyaa irraa dhaga’amu utuu hin taane, amantii xinnoo ishee nu keessatti arguu barbaada. Egaa koottaa “amantii tokko” isa fayyina ittiin arganne sanatti maxxannee “maqaa baay’ee” warri Kristoositti amanan ittiin waamamaniin gargar goodnee, utuu qoqqobbii wal-irra hin kaa’in goofticha isa dhi’ootti deebi’ee dhufuu jiru sanaaf haa jiraannu!

III. Greetings from OROECM President

By Addisu Shunkuri

I extend greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota members and the whole

Christian Church communities, through our church publication Sagalee Abdii. I also say praise be to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for His guidance throughout our difficult time.

Like all of you, I get so energized when I look back and remember what God has done in our Church; at the same time, I am very excited to imagine the miracles He has for us for the future. Therefore, as our Church Theme of The Year, (forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, Philippians 3:13) reminds us, I encourage all of us to fix our eyes on His Cross, our destination. We shall focus on the future and reach out to other churches and build a relationship that we lost for many years, and also reestablish our relationship with our churches back home.

Finally, I would like to thank the Sagalee Abdii Editorial Team for the service they are providing through our church publication to keep our church in touch with the rest of Christian Communities, our people back home as well as in Diaspora. Also, on behalf of the whole Council I would like to ask all of our members to pray for us as we begin this new chapter in our Church history.

Blessings!

IV. Various brief news from around OROECM

1- Sunday, 22 September 2019 at Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, OROECM.

By Sagalee Abdii Editorial Team

It's often said that "history repeats itself"; and it seems to be true. It would have been nice if only history repeats itself with positive impact for the betterment of communities, society, humanity and God's creation as

a whole. But it is also said that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" what is positive is in the eyes of the beholder.

Our church, OROECM was in limbo for almost 2 years as a church body, after a nameless letter dated 14 October 2017 was delivered to the former Pastor of our church. Though it said from a group concerned about the wellbeing of its church the immediate result was that it divided and paralyzed the church; the issue being our church's membership in Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA. One thing that was a mystery and still remains a mystery to most of us was why a group which had good intention about the wellbeing of its church had to hide its name. (I John 1: 5-7).

After a turmoil of almost 2 years, debate and discussions, believing if we could resolve the issue peacefully but unable to reach agreement, Sunday 22 September 2019 was set as a day for a special meeting to vote to terminate our denominational affiliation with ELCA. First we earnestly thank God that the first such a vote, in the history of our church to decide whether to break our affiliation or not was conducted smoothly and concluded peacefully. In view of what had been going on for two years right in the sanctuary, during worship and all sorts of things going on online and offline, the way the vote was conducted and concluded was nothing short of a miracle; and it is only God that works miracles..

Thus, what we witnessed on Sunday 22 September 2019 clearly affirmed that God is with our church, His church and this church. We say this convinced not because Exit-ELCA Group, in spite of working on it relentlessly yet did not get the required 2/3 majority. **The result was stunning for both groups.** The exit-Group was definitely 100% sure that it would get what it was working for and was very relaxed and ready to celebrate the outcome. The OROECM/ELCA members did not expect **the surprising result either but left the whole thing to God. In short the result was not what we all expected but rather God's verdict for His church, we call it Devine intervention.** As we watched everyone's face, when the result was announced

everyone was stunned and shocked and what had happened has not sunk in yet, for both groups in disbelief though we need to come back to our senses and accept that God's way is different from our ways and our calculation. He was and is simply watching us from above and in control.

That Sunday, at the beginning of the meeting the President said that "the previous day, on Saturday (21 September 2019) we all prayed to God that His will be done not our will and he said it is not this or that group winning but the will of God be done and we have to respect the result either way". Also, at the end of the vote before announcing the result he repeated it again that it is not this group or that group winning but God's will for our church and emphasized that, if possible, accept the result and remain as one church of the Lord. **Waliin taanee wal'duukaa luccofnee** comes here and appropriate.

At this junction we would like to note, in fairness, that the President Obbo Yemane presided over and led the meeting well, although he was one of the leading coordinators of the exit-Group right from the beginning and elected President with a mandate from the Exit-Group to terminate our church affiliation with ELCA.

When the unexpected announcement was made, our group, OROECM/ELCA members respected the call of the President and did not display anything and suppressed their emotion but simply thank God in their heart. No euphoria, jumping up and down; they say some just pinched themselves very hard to suppress their emotion saying stay calm.

After the peacefully conducted vote by the Council put in place by the exit-Group and mandated to effect the termination of the membership of our church in ELCA and the result announced by the President and the meeting concluded still there have been few people who continued to complain about the outcome, which is bizarre to say the least; those people must have believed "God's will was only if it were according to "their will".

Brief recap of the sequence of development of events from 14 October 2017, the date the issue of leaving ELCA surfaced, to Sunday, 22 September

2019, the day the issue was closed with the vote according to the constitution of the church:

In October 2017 an anonymous letter demanding a Congregational meeting on the issue of withdrawing our membership from ELCA was submitted to the then Senior Pastor, Pastor Melkamu Negari, strictly warning him not to involve the then Church Council. But still the Pastor brought the letter to the Council.

The Council out of "good will" and respect for the Pastor agreed to look at it if we as a church could have honest discussions to clarify the condition of our membership in ELCA and our stand on the contentious issue of the Social Statement, which we thought settled 5 years before, in 2012. (Actually, the Council did not have any obligation to take it up since the letter asked the Pastor not to involve the Council and could have said to the Pastor to handle it as he sees it). Several discussions were held, among them the teaching by our then Assistance Pastor, Pastor Wondimu Legesse Sonessa, who was requested by the Senior Pastor and the Council to do so.

The group that was pushing for the breakup with ELCA was slowly coming out and calling itself exit-ELCA Group accused the then Council of "not willing nor having the capacity to deal with the issue of ELCA".

Then the President announced that the exit-Group submit formal request according to the condition stipulated in the church constitution so that the Council call Special Congregational meeting to discuss the issue and decide,

But the exit-Group leadership, by now calling itself a Coordinating Committee sent a letter to the Council, saying that it did not want to submit the request for a special meeting, it said it had shelved the issue of exit-ELCA, instead wanted to move on with the election of a new Council. Thus, a new Council all of them from the exit-Group was elected, (despite questionably) and installed in February 2019 and immediately started working on fulfilling the mandate they were given, to break OROECM membership in ELCA.

Several Task Forces, Advisors and Jaarsummaa (mediation) were organized throughout the two years to work on a mechanism of leaving ELCA unanimously. In all those pushes there was no consideration for the option to maintain our membership in ELCA since we did not have any compelling reason to leave our historical denomination, ELCA as nothing was forced upon us or changed from our stand of 2012 to leave ELCA; it was devised, a smart move if everyone agrees to break with ELCA avoiding the need to get 2/3 members signing and submitting a formal request.

While the issue of the Social Statement was all along a cover up, it was clear that several dynamics were at work for different agendas from within and without; nothing to do with the Word of God or faith.

One of the main campaign slogans as justification for breaking with ELCA that we kept hearing about was the ownership of the church building. At some point in the past the congregation was told that the building was given to our church and we had the deed in our safe and could do whatever we want with it. People were overly excited about it and started to say, “now the building is ours why do we need the Synod, why do we remain in ELCA”? For most members the building was not an issue, it was immaterial compared to our faith in word of God. For us there was no way that we could compromise our belief in the Word of God in order to be able to use the building, nor we abandon our membership in ELCA without any pressure put on us as a return to be able to use the building, forcing us to compromise our belief. That was difficult to fathom to say the least! But at the end we also heard that, actually the deed was not in the safe nor we were given the building in the first place.

The other point of campaign by some, as a reason to break with ELCA, the church body they branded, “abandoned the Word of God and went astray from the true faith”; the point we often heard from the pulpit as well as in our church meeting was, “God sent us to America to preach the Gospel, to witness because churches in America including ELCA abandoned the faith”. Well, let us even give this claim the benefit of the doubt and say, there may be some truth, little truth

in this probably remotely, we do not know. But one thing we seem to forget when we claim this, without any reservation, we totally forget how we got here, in this country in the first place. For the sake of the truth were there any of us whose vision, dream, driving reason was to come to America to ‘preach the Gospel, witness to the people who went astray from the faith and save the Land’, or did we do whatever we could in whatever way possible, just to get here? But quite a number of us after arriving here, often start to claim that saving the lost faith was our vision and our mission. Really! At the same time the main means of their witness is to “run away from the so-called sinners, because the Word of God says so”, (Sagaleen Waaqayyo baqadhaa jedha)!

The other justification by some for breaking with ELCA all of us together was to maintain the unity of our people, Oromo unity. Whether it is claimed honestly or not this was a very easy way to work on people’s emotions. Historical records are tangible witness that this church as a member of ELCA was out front to bring to the attention of the world the plight of our people during difficult times. Most of the members of this church suffered persecutions, imprisonment under successive Ethiopian regimes for firmly standing for the right of our people and never stopped to do so for fear of retribution. Our church also, as an institution and its members were very committed, supportive and genuinely loyal to United Oromo Oromo Evangelical Churches, UOEC with no ulterior motive except strengthening the unity of our people, and UOEC vision and mission as laid down in its constitution; our common denominator being “Evangelicals” with their particular denominational affiliation and confession.



The above picture depicts two of these five Oromo Evangelical Churches Pastors in the Twin Cities area at the Oromo Community demonstration in the Twin cities gatherings at Minnesota State Capitol are OROECM Pastors, May 2014.



Dungoo Qabsiisuun Biyya keenya fi Saba keenya kadhata, dargaggoota Oromoo wareegamaniifis yaadannoo Waldaa OROECM, Fulbaana 2014



OROECM Mothers laying flowers at MN State Capitol in remembrance of the killed Oromo Children, May 2014.

After all the confusion and chaos of 2 years, (short 3 weeks), we finally arrived at Sunday, 22 September 2019 to settle the issue through vote. (The Exit-Group mobilized and brought 191 people and the group that wanted to remain with ELCA were 91 people with 5 abstentions during the voting). Actually, we heard that Pastor Craig from Minneapolis Area Synod who was at our church to observe the vote asked if that many people are all regular attendees of the Sunday service. Considering how much and how well it was relentlessly worked on it; the surprising result was a “no” to breaking our affiliation with ELCA our Denomination and Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, OROECM remains a Congregational member of ELCA!

But without speculating all the dynamics, interest and war that were at work to destabilize this church we put down below the truth about, may be, the misunderstood or purposely misused as a slogan targeting this church, the ELCA 2009 Social Statement on Human Sexuality and OROECM Stand, key points:

ELCA, as a church denomination of more than 9000 congregations in 2009 issued a Social Statement on the issue of human sexuality. The essence of the Social Statement or the key points were as covered in the 4 paragraphs given below, directly taken from the document. The passing of the Social Statement led to some disagreement among member congregations

and some configurations broke their relations with ELCA.

Many of those who campaigned for the break of relation of our own church, OROECM from within and from without did not have any idea about the real content of the Social Statement. They simply claimed that “ELCA as a church has abandoned the Word of God” and the Christian understanding of the institution of marriage blessed and established by God at the beginning of time. Their slogan up to this day is, **“maqaa keenyatu nu bade, maquma kana nu irraa kaasaa; simply put in English, our name is tarnished for associating with this name, remove us from under this name, ELCA”**

The ELCA Social Statement as summarized in the key points of the following 4 paragraphs meant to accommodate the varying view held on human sexuality by its member congregations and individuals. In these 4 varying views, even in the 4th paragraph, **the closest that the statement came to accommodate same gender relationship, yet it did not equate it to the level of the traditional marriage that we know, the natural one.**

“This church also acknowledges that consensus does not exist concerning how to regard same-gender committed relationships, even after many years of thoughtful, respectful, and faithful study and conversation. We do not have agreement on whether this church should honor these relationships and uplift, shelter, and protect them or on precisely how it is appropriate to do so”. (2009 Social statement page 19).

The core point of the Social Statement affirms, “Marriage is a covenant of mutual promises, commitment, and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God. The historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions have recognized marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, reflecting Mark 10: 6–9: “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one put asunder.” (Jesus here recalls Genesis 1:27; 2:23–24.)

Thus the 4 different stands of the member congregations on the issue summarized below:

- **On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that same-gender sexual behavior is sinful, contrary to biblical teaching and their understanding of natural law.** They believe same-gender sexual behavior carries the grave danger of unrepentant sin. They therefore conclude that the neighbor and the community are best served by calling people in same-gender sexual relationships to repentance for that behavior and to a celibate lifestyle. Such decisions are intended to be accompanied by pastoral response and community support.

- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that homosexuality and even lifelong, monogamous, homosexual relationships reflect a broken world in which some relationships do not pattern themselves after the creation God intended. While they acknowledge that such relationships may be lived out with mutuality and care, they do not believe that the neighbor or community are best served by publicly recognizing such relationships as traditional marriage.

- On the basis of conscience-bound belief, **some are convinced that the scriptural witness does not address the context of sexual orientation and committed relationships that we experience today.** They believe that the neighbor and community are best served when same-gender relationships are lived out with lifelong and monogamous commitments that are held to the same rigorous standards, sexual ethics, and status as heterosexual marriage. They surround such couples and their lifelong commitments with prayer to live in ways that glorify God, and strength for the challenges that will be faced and serve others. They believe same-gender couples should avail themselves of social and legal support for themselves, their children, and other dependents and seek the highest legal accountability available for their relationships

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Note: The above is directly taken as a quote from the 2009 Social statement of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Churchwide Assembly held in Minneapolis, MN.

Once the Social Statement was passed, except for those congregations who immediately withdrew and established North American Lutheran Church, there were no more infights among the congregations on the issue as the decision whether to accept it or not was left to each member congregation. But with our Diaspora churches it became and still remains as means to drive perpetual break up of Oromo churches. It has become a convincing reason for those who drive other agendas. Unfortunately, most people, especially the new arrivals repeat what they were told and do not have any idea about the content of the Social Statement and the firm stand of most member congregations of ELCA, including our own church.

We also cite below an excerpt from the ELCA Presiding Bishop, the Honorable Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's pastoral letter dated 30th June 2015 following the US Supreme Court decision of June 15, 2015 on the right of same-gender relationship, the Bishop stating clearly showing the varying stand of ELCA member Congregations based on their understanding of the Word of God on the issue.

The ELCA social statement "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" (2009) neither endorses nor forbids same-gender marriages and recognizes that we have differing understandings and convictions on this matter. In its decision, the court stated that "the First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths. "According to this church's social statement on human sexuality, all decisions about recognizing, supporting and holding publicly accountable same-gender relationships are entrusted to congregations. Recognizing that the church, (ELCA) is not of one mind on this subject, our 2009 actions provide that congregations and

clergy should discern together whether to recognize such relationships and to what degree. Pastors are to engage in conversation, discernment and partnership with the congregations who have called them prior to solemnizing or presiding over a same-gender marriage. On the other hand, no pastor is obligated to solemnize the marriage of any couple, same-gender or different-gender, whom the pastor cannot in good conscience marry.

Thus, the closest that ELCA Social Statement of 2009 came to recognize/accommodate same-gender relationship was in the last, the 4th paragraph above showing there are at least 4 different views that the congregations hold on the issue. Even the position in the 4th paragraph does not equate same-gender relationship with the traditional marriage as we know blessed by God with clear cut **design of the Creator that made a man and a woman; opposite gift that were made for one another which is also part of God's plan not only for the propagation of humanity, as given in the 1st paragraph above but for all God's creation**; stressing, "on the basis of conscience-bound belief, some are convinced that same-gender sexual behavior is sinful, contrary to biblical teaching and their understanding of natural law".

The Lord designing, creating in His own way and blessing them with their reproductive system, it was only to the man and the woman together that God said, "Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth", only from between the two. Genesis 1:28.

Thus the "natural law" God's creation as we understand; a man and a woman, for that matter all species were created by God male and female in such a way that their gifts perfectly complement one another. Our conviction, our belief outside of that, even apart from the Word of God do not have any logic nor make any sense from the physical aspect of creation, though we, as people do not have any idea nor grasp the emotional side of it. Thus, we as Christians, first and foremost based on the Word of God, we are convinced that not only according to the Word of God but also from the clear mark of creation, believe that the Lord created only a man for a woman and a woman for a man!

This view, based on the Word of God and the clear mark of creation shows the belief that our church as congregation affirms and uphold not as some uninformed people or those who purposely would

like to smear the name of this church would like to spread false/wrong information.

What human society has been struggling with as long as human history and is beyond our understanding and still grapple with; is the question, what causes the mix up that leads to the same gender attraction to one another. Only God knows and we do not get into the judgment which many of us with little understanding jump into doing so. Coming from our Oromo strict traditional culture, most of us are not comfortable with the idea that there is such a thing, even the thought of it, but as Christians we have come to an understanding to leave the judgment to the Lord, as the Prophet Ezekiel said in his book chapter 37:3, "....."**I said Sovereign Lord, You alone know it**". (" Yaa Waaqayyo Gooftaa kana si duwwaatu beeka nan'jedhe".) **and this is Not "compromising nor abandoning the Word of God" but a firm and clear stand leaving the judgment to God.**

The ELCA Social Statement starts all the 4 paragraphs with, **"On the basis of conscience-bound belief". But the clear stand of our church is "on the basis of the Word of God as originally designed and given and also the clear mark of the "natural law" set by God, and we are convinced with absolute clear "conscious". Thus, the majority of ELCA congregations teach and individual members hold that "marriage" is only between one man and one woman. Our church, Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, OROECM preaches and continue to teach that marriage according to the Word of God and His mark of creation is only between a man and woman and no State or any institution church or otherwise can change this truth, though on the other hand the law of this land guarantees the right of individuals to live their lives as they wish and see as long as they do Not infringe on the rights of others and vice-versa.**

Therefore, on the basis of our belief in the Word of God and as long as no pressure is put on us we do not see any reason to break our decades old relationship with ELCA, and above all abandon those congregations who hold the same view as our church on the issue. We will continue to be true to our faith and conviction in the Gospel of our Lord and we dare to abide by the truth whatever the unwarranted pressure on our church and members. We firmly believe that maintaining our membership with our stand on the issue as made clear above is a true witness within the

denomination; **"those who have ears to hear" let them know!**

Martin Luther was the first theologian who used the phrase, "conscious-bound belief" before the Diet of Worms in the year 1521 AD. But Luther's "conscious-bound belief was not separate from the Word of God but rather based on and underlining it that he believed in his stand on Word of God with clear conscious. Luther said before the Diet, "My conscious is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything because it is neither safe nor right to go against conscious."

Sadly, for more than two years our church, our members especially those who had no other motives except to come to their church and worship the Lord every Sunday endured all sorts of turmoil, unchurch like behavior outside as well as in the sanctuary. Though, there were no differences whatsoever between those members who vehemently campaigned against continued membership in ELCA and those who did not see any immediate reason to break on the issue, unfortunately we were not able to save the unity of our church. Those who voted for break up when they realized that they did not get the required vote must have decided to look for other options. Our church heard through the former President Obbo Yemane that most of the Council members who took the mandate to deliver the withdrawal of our membership from ELCA and worked on it tirelessly resigned and so the church split. ***"Walii gallee, walduukaa luuccofnee waliin wajjin turuu hin dandeenye. (we could not resolve our differences in understanding the issue to remain together by agreeing to maintain our unity, saving our church from the pain of split). We believed that we all were sincere and committed to maintain the unity of our church and our fellowship; but it did not work out that way.***

The whole plan and preparation to make sure to deliver the breakup with ELCA was conducted by the Council which the exit-Group worked on it and put in place. The day of the vote every one of the exit-Group was 100% sure that our church would be out of ELCA membership as of that day until the result of the vote was announced and it was not what they expected. Several times during the meetings Obbo Yemane did affirm that on the issue of homosexuality there were no difference between the exit-Group and those who want to

maintain our membership in ELCA; he said, the difference is only how we perceived it.

Well, unfortunately what happened had happened, however **this church, the church of the Lord is still open to anyone who would like to come and worship with us in Spirit and Truth without any other motive, except to worship and fellowship, with the understanding that OROECM is a member congregation of ELCA.** But those who chose other options we wish them sincere good luck and pray for one another and hope that we all preach Jesus Christ, the Lord. **“Glory to God in the highest, Peace on Earth and Goodwill among God’s People”.** **Luck 2:14. Good will among our people!**

****(Originally drafted October 2019 and revised Feb 20, 2020)*

2- THANKSGIVING Celebration, (2019) at Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, OROECM.

By Alemayeu Baisa

Since its establishment as the first Oromo Evangelical Church in the Diaspora two and half decades ago, our Oromo Evangelical Lutheran in Minnesota, OELCM, which later adopted the name ‘Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota, OROECM’, celebrated THANKSGIVING every year, on the eve of the actual Thanksgiving Day. This time it was on the 25th November 2019 and our church celebrated on its eve on the 24th November 2019. The reason for the celebration on the eve has been because of the consideration that congregation members also celebrate Thanksgiving on Thanksgiving Day with their families, relatives and nearest of kin, who at times travel from across other States or even more distant places.

As is explained elsewhere in this Volume, our church has been through a lot, as the issue of exiting- ELCA issue continued unendingly, for the previous two years. Our Church/ELCA members who wanted to maintain our membership in ELCA believed that it is God’s will that we stay in partnership with the ELCA and did not see any convincing reason to break our long-time relationship with them. This year, therefore, our church members gave Thanks for God’s will of

bringing the issues to conclusion on September 22, 2019 peacefully. We prayed & wished we would stay together with our brothers and sisters, but while we also left it in His hands as to what the result would be. When it ended in the way it did, we had nothing to say but praise & glorify God. There was a lot of thanks for bringing us so far, and for continuing to praise the Lord, for ourselves, our families and our church.





On the Thanksgiving Eve at our church, we gave thanks to the Lord, and our Pastor Wondimu preached from the Word of God; our church choir, children & youth, mothers and fathers groups sang Thanksgiving, songs praising God. At the end, the entire congregation lit candles and glorified His name. Our beloved women ministry prepared delicious dinner.

3- The Election and Installation of New Church Council (02 Feb 2020).

By Admasu Simeso

Our church, Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minnesota on 02/02/2020 (historical numbers and day) elected new Council members from confirmed and communing members, according to its constitution, to serve as Council (Elders) of our church; 4 of them for the next 2 years and 2 for one year to restore its alternating system in which the President and 3 others elected the same year and the Vice-President and one member elected the other year.

Three of the people who were elected as President, the Secretary and the Treasurer have been on the job serving as Transitional Council since October 2019 following the church split after a difficult two years and five of the six former Council members left with the breakaway group. The three who immediately filled the void were, Obbo Addisu Shunkuri, President; Obbo Yadasa Birri, Secretary and Aadde Wanitu

Estefanos Treasure. Those three handled all the leadership of the church during almost 4 months of the difficult transitional time.

To work on the election, the Election Committee was established with Aadde Lydia Ashana as Chairperson: the rest of the committee members were, Obbo Yifru Ayana, Aadde Daraartu Kana'a, Obbo Aron Abdissa and Aadde Talile Duresso. The Election Committee in its report mentioned that it contacted several would be candidates and finally came up with 4 candidates: Obbo Kibru Taddese, Obbo Yosef Aagaa, Aadde Genet Yadata and Obbo Gamachis Yadesa. Two more people were to be nominated by the congregation from the House.

Before the election day, for two consecutive Sundays, 26 January and the election day 02 February, 2020 our Pastor, Pastor Wondimu L. Sonessa, based on the letter of Apostle Paul to Tituss 1:5-9 gave very relevant teachings on what is required of people who would be elected to lead/serve the Church of Our Lord. According to Apostle Paul the requirement for the position is very high, especially where he says the person to be elected to the position of the elder of the church should be "blameless". If we think that we are blameless right there we fail. No human being is blameless except our Lord Jesus the Christ. The Lord clearly knows our strength and also our shortcomings and trusting in His grace we accept the call.

The other point that the Apostle mentions is that the person called to be an elder should be a husband of only one wife. Here he seems to talk about only men serving as elders; otherwise he should have also said a woman of one husband. But what we should understand is that at that time, in the early history of the church as well in the whole structure of the society of the time it was only men that served in such position and women were excluded, at least from the leadership; there are some churches who still today follow this. But in our time as women have come a long way and have equal or in some cases even more gift of leadership than men in the Grace of God, it is past due to also say, "a woman of one husband". We may not be aware that in ancient times as well as still today in certain parts of the world in some countries it

is normal for a woman to be married to more than one husband, actually multiple husbands, except probably in Africa. Although churches have not used nor recite this during installation of Elders which include women we take it that it is understood although not said.

On Sunday, 02 February 2020 the election was conducted in the most peaceful manner, accordingly:

- 1) Obbo Addisu Shunkuri, President;
- 2) Obbo Yosef Aga, Vice-President;
- 3) Obbo Yadasa Birri, Secretary;
- 4) Aadde Wanitu Estifanos, Treasurer;
- 5) Aadde Genet Yadata, member and
- 6) Obbo Gamachis Yadesa, member and with the Pastor of the church a total of seven Council members.

On Sunday, 09 February 2020, according to the constitution of the church, the new Council members took oath of service in front of the congregation and were formally installed.



Installation of the new Council members, 02/09/2020



OROECM Council members, (r to l Obbo Yosef Aga, V/Presiddent; Obbo Addisu Shunkuri, President; Obbo Yadasa Birri, Secretary, Aadde Wayyitu Estfanos, Treasurer; Aadde Genet Yadata, member and Obbo Gamachis Yadasa. Member). Photo by Chali Yadasa.

In one of his usual short statements to the congregation the new President said, “we should focus on the future, start to work with our Synod the Minneapolis Area Synod, reach out to other churches and build relationships that we lost for many years and also reestablish contact with our churches back home”. Thus, with all signs of humble and effective leadership by example in place we thank God for the positive new beginning!

4- Sunday December 1, 2019, the visit of our Bishop, Bishop Ann M. Svennungsen of Minneapolis Area Synod visit to our congregation.

By Admasu Simeso

Sunday, 01 December 2019 was the starting of the Advent Season, in the Lutheran Church Calendar, starting from that first Sunday in December until Christmas Day, December 25. On our first Advent Season day our church was lucky and blessed that the Minneapolis Area Synod Bishop, Bishop Ann Svennungsen visited our church and worshiped with us and shared the Word of God with our congregation. Our then interim President Addisu Shunkuri welcomed

her and introduced her to the congregation which gave her a very warm welcome.



Bishop Ann M. Svennungsen of Minneapolis Area Synod preaching at OROECM (Picture by Chali Y adasa)

In her opening statement, first she brought the congregation greetings on behalf of all the congregations of Minneapolis Area Synod, from the ELCA Presiding Bishop, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton and from the President of the Lutheran World Federation, the Archbishop Dr Panti Filibus Musa Archbishop of the Lutheran Church of Christ of Nigeria.

She also cited the long historical relationship among the Lutheran churches worldwide including the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, EECMY and its well-respected and legendary General Secretary the Rev. Gudina Tumsa and his contribution and impact on Lutheran ministry, with his theology of, "Holistic Ministry, Serving the Whole Man".

Following the greetings, she said, "thank you for sharing the pulpit with me, with us" alluding to the view from some churches and congregations including some of our Oromo churches refusing to share pulpits with ELCA member congregations on the issue of the 2009 Social Statement. There are also other denominations that do not share pulpits and Holy Communion with other churches for different reasons.

Next she assured the congregation that Minneapolis Area Synod and ELCA at large would very much like

to have Oromo congregations as their members. She said, during the discussions in OROECM and difficult time your church went through we did not know which way it will end and what to do and how to be of any assistant to your church. She continued, "now the issue is resolved, and the uncertainty is over through the vote of 22 September 2019 and the amazing thing was how close the vote was and how different the result and we are happy and excited to continue to have your congregation as our member".

In her sermon which was taken from the Gospel of Matthew 26 she quoted the Lord where he said to His sleepy disciples, "stay awake and pray". She said the evils of this world tried to put Him to sleep by crucifying Him on the cross, but God raised from among the dead, from the sleep.

After the service the Bishop joined the congregation in Aster Gannoo Hall for fellowship time where she moved around from table to table and greeted the people personally and chatted with them. It was an enriching time we had with her.

5- Christmas and the 2019 New Year Spiritual conference:

By Admasu Simeso

As customary our church celebrated Christmas, the commemoration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, Christmas Eve, 24 December 2019, because on Christmas day the 25th of December, it is the family day together.

From Sunday, 29 to Tuesday the 31 December 2019 we had a 3 days Spiritual Conference. On Sunday the 12/29/19 we had the conference during the regular Church program and on Monday and Tuesday in the evenings and concluded our Spiritual Conference Tuesday, 31 December at mid-night by welcoming the New Year 2020 aptly "leaving behind the old and reaching forward for the New" in the spirit of the theme of our church for this year.

Thus, theme of our spiritual Conference was based on the theme of our church of the year, 2020, taken from Philipians 3:13, "...*forgetting those things which are behind us (including our turmoil of 2 years) and*

reaching forward in faith to those things which are ahead of us”..

Pastor Kibreab Banti Guddataa, from Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hagerstown, Maryland preached the Word of God to us during our conference, based on the theme of our church. One of our church’s favorite Oromo Gospel singers, Dr. Talile Fiqru sang for us her theologically sound and refreshing songs.



Pastor Kibreab Banti preaching at our New Year Conference. (Picture by Chali Yadasa)

An impression of Pastor Kibreab’s service during the conference: To begin with Pastor Kibreab is very knowledgeable about his theology and very articulate in his presentation. His approach, humble and Christ centered as opposed to the current trend of self-promotion by those who call themselves preachers but preach about themselves instead of about the Lord, although they use His name to get the first attention. Furthermore, Pastor Kibreab delivers his message in a way that laypeople could understand; without any drama to impress his audience but still very effective. We are pleased and thank God to have such a person, among the few selfless servants of the Lord we have among our Oromo Pastors.

A brief recap of his message- He used the life of Apostle Paul quite often, the Apostle remaining true to what he believed no matter the situation in which he was in such as, when he wrote his epistle to the Philippians from the prison in Rome. Plus, Apostle Paul never bragged about his achievements and when thought like doing he bragged in the Lord. Few other touching points from his sermons:

- a) Once we believe and accept Christ, our lives built on the Gospel of the Lord should be stable and honest always whether people watch us or when we are alone by ourselves, it should show who we are.
- b) Stand firm for what you believe- (dubbiin isaa dubbi dhaabbachuuti), the issue is about standing firm.
- c) Stand firm in what you believe without the fear of those who are against you because God does not want us to live in fear; a right decision is made out of faith not out of fear.
- d) He stressed that the church should be of one mind and one Spirit; it should be Gospel driven not purpose driven, the real motive, the real purpose spreading the Gospel in truth.
- e) We build on what is already built not always come with new idea tear down the past and build a new.
- f) In his sermon on 12/30/2019 he emphasized that a Christian always aspires a meaningful life according to the Word of God
- g) On New Year Eve, 12/31/2019 his central message was (hinceena, this word has deep meaning in Oromo) we’ll cross over, move on apt meaning to cross from the old year 2019 to the new 2020.
- h) In order to cross over, to move on we must have strong people in their faith and where we can avoid the following types of people:
 - constant complainers.
 - ne sayers, they like to say no to everything.
 - braggers (ofjajjuu), those who always brag about themselves.
 - The flackers those who do not have stand just float or drift with the crowd.

In brief to summarize his overall point he put that the life of a Christian is not to dwell on the past, though

we build on it but look forward, aim forward and stretch. He said Apostle Paul the most committed apostle of Christ, did not brag, although he had all the right to do so, he said, he did not complete his running forward still aiming and moving forward until the end when he meets the Lord face to face.

Dr, Talile lifted our spirit by singing her famous songs: *ka'ii ibsi, sirraa barree, nagaa* etc.



Dr Talile Fiqiru (Picture by Chali Yadasa)

Ka'ii ibsi 2 (Faarsaa Dr. Talile Fiqiru)

*Ka'ii ibsi, dhugaa Wangeelaa labsi,
Hidhaa namaa hiika Wangeelli,
Ija namaa bana Wangeelli,
Waanjoo du'aa cabsa Wangeelli,
Nama bilisoomsa Wangeelli.
Kaanee haa'ibsinu, dhugaa Wangeelaa haalbsinu.*

*Yaarabbi uumaa keenyaa,
Nuu qaqqabi saba keenya,
Waanjoo diinaa nu'irraa haa'cabu,
Bilisummaan lubbuu fi foonii nuuf haadhufu!
Bilismmaan lubbuu fi foonii nuuf haadhufu!*



OROECM Children Choir singing Christmas Eve (Photo by Chali Yadasa)



OROECM Worship Team, (Photo by Chali Yadasa)

6- Tajaajila Dubartoota OROECM

By Dune Silga

Dubarrooti waldaa kirstaanaa Oromoo Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church, gara bara 30'f lafee dugdaa waldaa kanaa tahaanii tajaajila **waldaa keessaa** fi alatti tajaajiluun, waldaan kuni guddattee akka dagaagduuf hedduu hojjetan. Baqattoota biyyaa dhufan **simachuu fi** utubuun akka isaan milla lamaan dhaabbatan taasisuu keessattis ga'ee guddaa qabu. Hojiin dubartooti **kenya** hojjetan aadaadhuma tahee hedduu yeroo dubbatamuu fi leellisamu haa xiqqaatu malee, tajaajilli isaan waldaa keessattii fi alatti kennan hedduu kan namas boonsu, Waaqayyos kan itti gammadu dha. Dubartooti **kenya** sagantaa waldaa keessatti tajaajilanii alatti, dubartooti akka isaanii yeroo dhukkubsatan, ijoollee godhatan fi gaddi itti seenu, **utuu** addaan hin kutin **mana isaanii** deemanii dubbisuun tajaajilu/jajjabeessu. Maallaqaanis waldaa bira akka addaatti dhaabbatu. Akkasumas dubartooti kuni ayyaanoota gurguddaa jiran keessaa kan akka 'Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year fi Easter' dhangaa addaa qopheessuun hundinuu waliin akka **nyaatee-dhugee akka waliin gammaduu fi galateeffatu** taaaisuun, baroota hedduuf akka kabajamu taaaisaniiru. Hojii isaan guyyaa tokko dadhabne **utuu** hin jedhin hojjetan kuni jajjabeeffamuufi ilaalcha gahaa argachuun isaaniifis jajjabina tahuun daran akka hojjetan gargaara.

7- Tajaajila Ijoolotaa fi Dargaggootaa(Ammas Abdiin Jira)

By Asaffaa Malkaa Waaqjiraa!

Ijoolleen waldaa borii qofa miti, waldaa har'aatis. Lubni Luuteraanii warra Jarmanii beekamaan Bon Hofeer jedhamu waldaan Kiristaanaa warra xixiyoota hin hammanne waldaa Kiristoos miti jedhe. Kanaaf, ijoolleen waldaa boriiti inni jedhu yeroo hedduu ijoolleef maal laanna jennee akka yaadnu nu godha. Garuu ijoolleen maal nuuf kennu, akkamiin nu tajaajiluu danda'u yaada jedhu nu dagachiisu mala. Yeroo hedduu murtii barbaachisaa waldaa kan jireenya ijoollee irratti dhiibbaa guddaa qabu kan dabarsu namoota guguddaa waan ta'eef sagaleen ijoollee fi dargaggoo hin dhaa'amin hafa. Fakkeenyaaf, yeroo waldaan bu'aa ba'ii gaarii fi hamaa keessa darbitu sagaleen ijoollee hin dhagaa'amu. Kana gara fuul duraatti Waldaan Kiristaanaa itti yaaddee gedderuu qabdi ergan jedhee booda haala amma tajaajilli ijoollee keenya Waldaa OROEC irra jiru tuquun fedha..

Waggoota lamaan darban haala rakkisaa keessa darbine. Ijoolleen keenya dhimmi marii irra darbee falmii ta'een baay'ee miidhamaan. Dhuma irrattis hiriyoota isaanii kan dhaban hedduudha. Waan isaan mudate kanas jecha ittiin ibsinuuf dhabnee rakkanne. Haa ta'u malee kanarraa hafnee ammas deebinee ijaaramaa jirra. Hojii kana keessatti Waaqayyo isa deebisee nu dhaabe galateeffanna. Eebba guddaa Waaqayyo ittiin nu eebbise namadha. Barsiisota jaalalaan gammadanii ijoollee keenya barsiisantu jira. Isaaniin namni argee galateeffachuu baates hojii guddaatti. Hawwii, Dureettii, Daraartuu, Urgoo, Daraartuu, Elsa ... Waaqayyo haa eebbisu jechuun jaalladha. Hafuurri keenya haara'aa jira. Ijoollonni tooraan barataa jiru..



The congregation praying for the children before they go to their Sunday School class.

Kana qofa miti dargaggoota keenyaafis sagantaa dhaabbata ji'atti yeroo tokko kan ta'u qabna. Maqaan saganticha '3F' jedhama. 3F [Faith, Food and Fellowship] jechuudha. Guyyaa Sambata duraa isa dhuma ji'aa irratti argamuu wal argina. Waliin laaqana nyaanne, waliin yeroo dabarsinee waliinis waaqessina. Sagantaa kana deggersa maallaqaa xiqqoo 'Duke Divinity Leadership Education' biraa argateen socho'aa jira. Yoo sochooneef Waaqayyo nu gargaaruuf nu waliin jira. Dargaggoon sagantaa kana irratti hirmaatanis OROEC qofatti kan murtaa'an miti. Gaaffii jireenyaa fi amantii kan dargagooni qaban waliin haasofna. Waliinis ni kadhanna. Waaqayyos nu baay'isaa jira. Gar fuula duraatti ammoo abbootaa fi haadhota waldaa keenyaas afeerree waliin hirbaata nyaachuu akkasumas irraa baruuf karoora qabna.

Dhuma irrattis akka Waaqayyo xinnaa fi guddaadhan hojjet akkasumas haala rakkisaa dabarsee haala mijeessu arguu keenya dhugaa baana. Tajaajilli ijoollee keenya abdachiisaadha. Abdiin sunis Waaqayyoodha. Kanaaf, abdiin jira jenna.

V. Brief Church and other news from back home.

1. Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Visits to Ethiopia, EECMY Synod of Birbir Dillaa in Airaa, Western Wallagga.

By Ms Karen Walhof, Good Shepherd Director Of Outreach Ministry.

From October 4 through 18, 2019, sixteen members and friends of Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd traveled to Ethiopia to be with God's people there. It was the fifth journey of Good Shepherd members during a now 14-year relationship with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus institutions.

First, we spent a couple of days in Addis Ababa. We worshiped with Bole Mekane Yesus Congregation on Sunday. We spent much of Monday at Mekane Yesus Seminary, where our music director, Ralph Johnson, led a workshop in singing four-part American choral music, at the invitation of the dean of the seminary's School of Music and Media, Amare Teklu. In addition, Good Shepherd's senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Karl Jacobson, and I met with Dr. Bruk Ayele, president of Mekane Yesus Seminary, and heard about their plans and hopes for the future of the seminary.



Music Workshop at Mekane Yesus Seminary by Mr. Ralph Johnson Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Music Director

Then we traveled to Aira, where we have had relationships since 2005 with the Lalo Aira Mekane

Yesus Congregation, Onesimus Nesib Seminary, and Aira Hospital. Pastor Melkamu Itefa, president of BirbirDilla Synod, welcomed us, and his staff made arrangements for our visit. We split into groups to spend time at each church institution and learn more about their challenges and visions for the future. We also visited students at Lalo Aira primary and secondary schools.

Dr. Jacobson presented three half-day lectures at Onesimus Nesib Seminary, at the invitation of the seminary principal, Pastor Zewditu Abdissu. The lectures were very well received by seminary students and faculty alike. We also were thrilled to present the gift of an electronic piano to the seminary, where no musical instruments previously were available to accompany worship.

We also visited the Yubdo Project, an agricultural project Good Shepherd had supported at its beginning in 2006. We were so impressed with its growth and Mekane Yesus' patient and visionary care of the earth and assistance to local farmers and families through that project.

One of the highlights in Aira was worshiping with our companion congregation, Lalo Aira, on Sunday. After worship, we had lunch with the congregation's elders, and together we promised to stay more closely in touch through frequent emails, helping each congregation know more about the other, re-affirming and deepening our companion relationship.



Worshiping with the local congregation in Aira,

It is noteworthy that the safety of traveling from Addis Ababa to Aira was in question until the day we left for

the west. Although we were cognizant of recent conflict in Wallagga, friends in the west and in Addis Ababa, as well as our Ethiopian drivers, finally encouraged us to go. Military checkpoints along the highway in the west were non-threatening and cordial, and it was a pleasant and safe trip to Aira. God was with us. And, oh, the beauty of the countryside as we traveled toward Aira!

When we arrived in Aira, we were greeted by President Melkamu with these words: “You came!” He talked with us about the year-long conflict that has gripped their area and the synod’s congregations with fear, and how grateful they were that we indeed arrived to be with them. It was a blessing for us all and reinforced the relationship we share as God’s children, brothers and sisters in Christ. We are family, committed to each other and eagerly wondering about what God has in store for us in the future!

Upon returning to Addis Ababa, Ralph Johnson continued his work with the seminary students, and on that Thursday, the 130-person chorus sang four anthems they had learned as part of chapel worship services. It was a wonderful experience for the students and for Good Shepherd travelers as they worshiped God through music. Members of the group also met with the girls receiving support through the REAL scholarship program at the Buraayyu-Katta school. Good Shepherd members support 28 girls through REAL. In addition, Pastor Jacobson, Girma Daka, and I had the opportunity and joy to meet with EECMY President Yonas Yigezu, sharing our experiences in the BirbirDilla Synod, expressing our ongoing commitment to our mission partners there, and encouraging conversation about reconciliation between our church bodies.

We went to Ethiopia to re-affirm commitments already made, to learn more about our brothers and sisters in Christ there, to meet new leadership in Aira, and perhaps to broaden ministries already underway. Now we wait for another time of peace when we can return and once again rekindle that spirit of community and love which surrounds us as we are God’s people together. Meanwhile, we work and communicate at a distance, made more effective and pleasant because

this visit brought us together as real people – not just names on an email or whispered by others – but real flesh-and-blood people. God’s people

2. Saba Keenya fi Biyya Keenyaa Nagaa! (Koree Gulaalaa Sagalee Abdiin)

Waldaan keenya, Waldaan Our Redeemer Oromo Evangelical Church Minnesota (OROECM), waggoota lamaan darban kana keessa, ‘sagalee abdiin’ maddi isaa Oromiyaa ta’ee, biyya keenyaa fi naannoo Gaanfa Afriikaa irraa dhagahamaa ture, nutis as biyya keessa jiraannu kanatti dhageenye Waaqayyo iyyata, kadhata, aarsaa fi wareegama mirga isaaniif ilmaan Oromo godhaniif imimman saba keenyaa bara dheeraa dhaga’e deebii kenef jennee gammadne. Abdiin mul’atee ture kun, boruun ifa ganamaa baqaqe sun akka milkaa’uu fi fiixaan ba’u, isa bara deeraaf kadhataa turreef Waaqayyoon galateeffachaa, itti fufnees kadhachaa turre. OROECM yeroo dheeraaf uummata keenya Oromiyaa keessa jiraatan, dhiphuu mootummoonni dhufaa-darbaan kan irraan gahaa turan jalaa, Waaqayyo akka isaan yaadatu, nagaa fi qabbana isaas akka erguuf, kadhannaa fi waan dandeenyeen bira dhaabbachaa turuun keenya ni yaadatama (Sagalee Abdii XII, Sept 2016 fuula 20-22, May 2014).

Qabsoo ummatni keenya xinnaa fi guddaan, akkasumas uummatooti biraan godhanii fi, boo’ichaa fi kadhannaa keenya hundaaf walakkeessa bara 2018 keessa rakkoo guddaa booda *sagaleen abdiin biyya keessa* fi alatti dhagahame. Sirni cunqursaa fi miidhaa yerroo dheeraa ture cabee, uummani keenya hamma tokko afuura baafate; mootummaan Itophiyaa Dr Abiy Ahmed’n geggeeffamus dhaabbate. Yeroo gabaabaa keessatti hidhamtoonni Oromoo fi kan ummatoota biraas mana hidhaa keessaa gadi-lakkifaman; dhaaboonni siyaasaa biyya alaa turanis biyyatti akka galan ta’e. Nutis, dhaaboonni siyaasaa Oromoo kan biyya alaati galanis, haala argame kanaan wal-gargaaruudhaan biyyicha keessatti dimokraasii dhugaa qajeelumma irratti hundaa’e babal’isuu fi mirga saba Oromoo fi uummatoota biraas guutummaatti mirkaneessuuf tattaaffachuuf, ummatni Oromoo mirga hiree ofii isaatii filannoo haqa

qabeessaan murteeffachuuf qophii taasisu kan jedhuun ummatti keenya abdiid guddaa qabaatee ture; *yeroon isaas yeroo abdiid ture.*

Yeroodhuma ce'umsaa gara jalqabaa kana keessa, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Muummichi Ministraa Ethiopia hojii nagaa buusuu kan biyya keessaa fi naannoo Gaanfa Afriikaa keessatti jalqabeen rakkoo Itoopiyaa fi Ertiraa gidduu baroota 20 oliif ture, nagan akka furamuuf Pirezidaantii Ertiraa wajjin walii galuun nagaa irratti waliif mallateessaniiru. Haa ta'u malee, araari mallattaa'e kuni sababa adda aaddaatiin guutummaatti hariiroo fi guddina biyyoota lamaaniif utuu hin ta'in turaniiru. Akkasumas muummich Ministraa Dr. Abiy, rakkolee Kibba Sudaan fi akkasumas Somaaliyaa keessatti nagaa fiduuf waan hedduu carraaqaniif, yeroo jalqabaaf namni dhalataa lammii Itophiyaa ta'e tokko 'Nobel Peace Prize kan bara 2019' badhaafamuu danda'ee jira. Waldaan keenya haala gammachiisaa kanaaf waaqayyoon guddaa galateeffattetti.

Kana ilaallee, haalli biyya keenya fi saba keenyaa fooyya'aa jira jennee abdataa utuu jirruu karaa biraa immoo oduun dhaga'aa dhufnee fi dhaga'aa jirru, haalli sabi keenya keessattuu yeroo amma keessa jiru, 'maali maaltu immoo ta'e' nu jechisiisee, gaaffii guddaa keessa nu galchee nu gaddisiiseera. Rakkoleen durumaan mootummaa taayitaa irraa bu'een ummata keenya Oromiyaa karaa bahaa irratti deemsifamaa ture qaamota jijjiirama sana dura dhaabbataniin caalaatti babal'atee, ummata keenya gara miliyona 2'tti lakkawamu biyya isaanii irraa fi ollaa irraa buqqaafaman ifaa ture. Haalli kunis dararama guddaa irraan gahu iyyuu, ummata Oromoo seexaa keessa galchee, tokkummaa isaa hedduu jabeessudhaan biyya keessaa fi alaan waliif dirmatee, of- irratti hirkannoodhaan qubachiisuu akka danda'ee ifaa dha; miseensonni waldaa keenyaas hamma danda'an itti birmatanii gargaaranii jiru.

Itti fufuun rakkoon kana fakkaatu, karaa Oromiyaa dhihaa ummanni kuma dhibbatti lakkaawamu buqqa'e rakkina guddaa keessa galee hamma yoonaa guutummaatti deebi'anii hintasgabbaa'in jiru. Buqqa'insa karaa adda addaa qofa utuu hinta'in, Itiyoophiyaa keessatti bakka adda addaatti lolli

ummatoota gidduutti, akkasumas mootummaa fi hidhattota gidduutti wal waraanuun babal'atee, keessatti iyyuu ummatni Oromoo Wallaggaa gara dhihaa, Gujii fi Booranaa jireenyi isaa guyyaa-guyyaa tasgabbiid dhabuun, qotatee fi daldalatee buluu erga dadhabee barri tokko darbee sabi rakkina Guddaa keessa akka jiru dhageenya.

Kadhata fi abdiin keenya, dhaabboti siyaasaa Oromoo hundi mirgi dhala namaa guutummaatti akka eegamuu fi akka kabajamu galiin gahuuf akka isaan hojjetaniif Waaqayyo akka isaan gargaarudha; itti fufnees kadhannaaf. Gurmuuleen amantiid addaa addaa hundinuus nagaa uummata keenyaa fi Oromiyaaf akkuma kanaan dura kadhachaafii turan, ammas Waaqayyotti iyyachuu akka isaan itti fufan ni amanna. Waldaan keenyaas yeroo dheeraaf sirna mootummoonni dhufaa-darbaan biyyatti ittiin dararama sabaa fi sablammoota hedduu, caalaatti immoo uummata Oromoo irraan gahaa bubbule Waaqayyo gara dimookiraasii dhugaatti akka jijjiiru kadhachaa turte; ammas itti fufti.

Sagaleen abdiid labsu yoom illee gab-jechuun yookaas ukkaamamuun tasumaa irra hin jiru. Sagaleen abdiid gurra uummata keenyaa fi uummatoota ollaa Oromiyaa jiraatan hundumaa biratti akka dhaga'amu hawwii fi abdiid keenya. Uuummatni keenya heddummina fi Waaqayyoon qaba. Diinni uummata keenyaa heddummina keenya kan gatii dhabsiisu, tooftaa gargar baasuun waan ta'eef, yoom iyyuu yaaluu dhiise hin beeku.

. Eгаа akka warra Abdiid'tti, karaa Sagaalee Abdii keenyaa waamichi nuti akka waldaatti dabarsuu barbaannu yaduma kanaa olitti keenyee dha. Kanaafis itti fufnee abdiidhaan Waaqayyoon kadhataa waan nu irraa barbaachisu gochuufis Waaqayyo nu hagargaaru.



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Sagalee Abdii

