



Chris and Suzy Wilson

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Location: Ethiopia



What we do: Working in reconciliation and peacebuilding with local Christian leaders.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to reach their God-given potential

Dear all,

Thanks for your prayers and support. It has felt like a busy few months, but the kids are doing well – Chris is enjoying his work, and Suzy is happy homeschooling and doing some other bits and pieces for SIM Ethiopia as need arises.

We decided to do this link letter a little differently and provide something of an overview of Chris’s work with refugees and a snapshot of what that looked like most recently.

Refugee theological education project

Ethiopia hosts one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. In the western regions of the country, refugee camps accommodate women, men and families displaced by conflict from South Sudan, Sudan, the Great Lakes region and beyond. While churches have rapidly emerged and grown within these camps, they face many challenges, as many of these refugees originate from contexts where access to theological education and leadership training has been severely limited.

This rapid expansion of the church in refugee settings is not new in the church’s history. Time and again, Christian faith has taken root and flourished through persecution, migration and displacement. The book of Acts recounts how, following Stephen’s martyrdom and the scattering of believers, the gospel spread from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire. Church history demonstrates how God often works through displacement: Christianity took hold in Ethiopia through Frumentius’ shipwreck, in Ireland through Patrick’s kidnapping and in Georgia through Nino’s captivity. Even today, God continues to work powerfully in disrupted and fragile contexts, as evidenced by the rapid growth of Christianity among South Sudanese refugee populations over the past 50 years.

As churches expand in the camps and many people spend several decades there, a clear need has arisen for theological training that is faithful, accessible and contextually grounded. Additionally, since many refugee camps are geographically remote and language barriers are significant, local Ethiopian churches have limited capacity to invest in these refugee congregations. Therefore, there is a genuine need for theological educators with strong English or Arabic skills who can collaborate with church leaders from refugee communities.



Recent family photo at Babogaya – a place near Addis we go to rest

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**

After we returned to Ethiopia following COVID-19, Chris taught at St Frumentius' Seminary in Gambella to help students catch up on classes they had missed during the lockdown. Due to conflict and instability, several refugees were unable to travel to Gambella, so Chris made two teaching trips to deliver these classes in the camp. While there, many church leaders requested that he return to provide training to help them with their preaching.

Since 2022, we've been responding to this request. Over many trips, conversations and thinking on the go, we've designed a course for preachers in refugee camps with no prior theological training. The course integrates biblical studies, Christian doctrine, homiletics and discipleship, all delivered with space for discussion and reflection on their relevance to camp life. During this period, we have run this course for leaders from more than 10 ethnic groups across several refugee camps in western Ethiopia. God has blessed us with a great little teaching team, including both international and local theological educators. In particular, we've been working closely with Simon, who was one of Chris's full-time students in Gambella, and it's been a profound encouragement to see him develop as he has served as a course coordinator, translator, and, more recently, a co-teacher. He's been invaluable both in helping us develop the course and in delivering it to church leaders in their mother tongue.

In January 2026, we conducted a new initiative. With generous support from SIM Ethiopia and one of our link churches in the UK, we organised two weeks' intensive training for a group of leaders from a small ethnic group that has only five Christian churches. God truly blessed this effort, with both instructors and trainees noticing a marked improvement in the quality of preaching. One of the instructors, Dr Simon Harrison, said, "It was amazing to see the clear impact of the training on the participants over the two weeks. Some went from never having preached before and being unsure of the gospel and who Christ is, to being able to preach a Christ-centred sermon that clearly presented the gospel." At the end of the training, interviews with the trainees reflected a similar story. One trainee said, "I learned so many things in that training – one of them is I found out Jesus is my Saviour. The second thing is – when I came here, it was not clear to me that Jesus is my God. But I understand that he's the one who brought me from darkness to light." Another added, "When I came from there, I didn't know how to preach at all, but now I have learned to preach."

It was a real joy to spend time with and invest in young leaders from a community where following Jesus is fraught with difficulties. Given the very positive response to this training, we hope to run more intensive training courses for leaders in places where the church is small and under pressure. Watch this space.

Please join us in praying for our brothers and sisters who are displaced, for refugees leading church communities in extremely challenging situations and for wisdom for our team as we partner with them.

With love,

Suzu and Chris



Photos from top to bottom: Chris teaching at the intensive training; Chris with teaching faculty at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds our faith when we hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. We hope that you're inspired as you read about Elinaja in Tanzania who is earning a living for his family thanks to new skills he learned at a CMS project. Read his story and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower