



Chris and Suzy Wilson

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Location: Ethiopia



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

Dear all,

Greetings from Addis, where the first rains have just begun to fall. It's been a while since we last wrote and so we'll focus on some of the major highlights and developments in the last few months.

Between September and December, Chris was able to make several teaching trips to serve church leaders in a refugee camp. As a result, he was able to complete the pilot course, which was originally launched in response to requests from church leaders in the camp to help with their preaching. In many ways, this course was as successful as we could have hoped. It was well-attended throughout the year, it succeeded in bringing church leaders from seven different ethnic groups together on a regular basis and the student feedback was very positive – almost everyone said that they had enjoyed the course, it had helped their ministry and that we should make an effort to continue it. In addition, Simon – another British mission partner – has been keen to join the team, which has been a big help and encouragement, as it's a very long journey and it's great to be able to share some of the work.

In December, Chris returned to the region in order to meet with church leaders from a neighbouring refugee camp who had requested that we run the same training course there. We've agreed that we'll work with 15 churches in this new camp and continue working with 10 churches in the other camp. In total, this means we're aiming to provide regular preaching and leadership training to about 60 different church leaders in the camps in 2024.

In January we travelled back to Gambella as a family to celebrate Jeremiah Maet being installed as bishop. Chris and Jeremiah worked together at St Frumentius' and he has remained a good friend since. There was so much joy in and around the church as they welcomed their first local bishop. We particularly appreciated seeing the elderly woman who repeatedly blew a horn to help encourage us to worship, and a celebratory goat covered in balloons and tinsel. While in Gambella, we also enjoyed joining the crowds of Orthodox Christians celebrating Timket in the Baro River and drinking coffee with lots of our Anuak friends and former students.



Chris visits St John the Baptist Anglican Church in the refugee camp

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



Over the last two months, Chris has been struggling with complications regarding permission to enter the refugee camp. A few weeks ago, he travelled there having prepared 10 hours of teaching, only to be told on the morning the training was supposed to start, that his application for access was denied. Since then, we've been working together with the leadership team here at SIM Ethiopia to address this; please pray that this situation changes soon. When he's not badgering officials regarding the refugee camp, Chris continues to work on his PhD. He's recently been working with Maria Power, a Roman Catholic scholar who is an expert on Christian responses to the conflict in Northern Ireland. This has been really helpful as he attempts to speak to challenges in that context and in this one.

A significant number of our former students from Gambella have managed to earn places at government universities and so it's been exciting to be on this journey together with them and to support and encourage them in various ways. We recently enjoyed having Ochalla come and stay with us in Addis as he made a four-day trip from his home in Gambella to the town in eastern Ethiopia where he has been posted for university.

Suzy continues to teach a few times a week in a deprived neighbourhood nearby. Recently there has been a smaller group of students coming, but this has helped to build up relationships with those students attending regularly, and to provide better teaching, as the range in ability previously had made this quite challenging. It is only 20 minutes from the compound and she really enjoys her walks there and back – there aren't many foreigners walking around this area of town and it is nice to feel like she is becoming something of a regular, even if the cries of "ferenge" (foreigner) still follow her around! She has also increasingly become involved with SIM's East Africa sending office. This organisation helps to send and support East African missionaries who are serving in other parts of the world. Currently there are more than 50 Ethiopian mission partners living and serving in other African and Asian locations. Suzy is mostly helping parents to think through how they can homeschool in their various contexts. It is a real privilege to be able to serve in this capacity and begin to get to know some of these amazing families.

Abigail, Matthew and Micah are doing well; they particularly enjoyed sports day, which the homeschool kids are able to participate in. Micah and Matthew are out most days playing football and it's been great to see Matthew out and playing with local kids who come and use the compound once a week.

Going forward, please pray for the nation; Addis is a slight anomaly compared to much of the country, where there continues to be fighting and significant tension. There are also increasingly serious concerns about a famine hitting the north.

Thanks all,

Love,

Suzy and Chris, Abigail, Matthew and Micah.



Photos from top to bottom: Bishop Jeremiah receiving his gift from the Mothers' Union; Timket in Gambella in the early morning; Abigail, Matthew and Micah after having a lovely time at sports day



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