



# Meserete Kristos Church

Newsletter 007 March 2020

## President's Message



Apostle Paul exhorts evangelical believers to act wisely and cautiously (Eph. 15:15).

When I was a child, worshipping the Lord together was very rare.

Believers did not dare to think of weekly meetings for worship. When possible, a group of believers attended a worship service once a month in the homes of believers living in isolated rural areas. We began travelling to the worship place after the sun set and returned home later that night after worship. This was because evangelical Christianity was banned by the communist government persecuted believers. Becoming followers of Jesus and worshipping with fellow believers was not allowed. At that time, every Christian home served as a church.

All believers worshipped their God in their homes. Our church had thousands of house churches. One of the most important factors that contributed to the growth of our church was the existence of vibrant home churches.

The government system of the time was abusive for many but suffering for the gospel believers was worse. Our persecutors were visible; we knew many of them. We could not fight against them because we did not have power to do so; but they were authorized to hunt and torture us. Our option was to hide and do our fellowship in secret. Sometimes when believers met face-to-face with persecutors, they did not say, "We are going to worship." Doing so was like surrendering themselves and others to imprisonment and suffering. So they went through that time wisely.

Since three decades, public worship became normal and worshipping with family members at home became less. The recent Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the world is the invisible enemy of all humans. The health professionals told us that physical contact among people increases the risk of infection as the virus is contagious. So, out of fear of the virus, we left communal worship temporarily and returned to private and family worship.

I want to share with you two ideas that I have observed from the incident. Firstly, COVID-19 virus didn't come by our will. But its arrival has forced us to make changes in our personal and corporate lives. In particular, the return of public worship to family worship can be a positive experience for us to strengthen family worship in every home. Secondly, it is important that we do everything we can to contain the virus, just as we have wisely dealt with persecution in the past. God's people walk wisely. May the Lord God help us all to navigate through this evil age, trusting in the protection and ability of our God. Amen!

## MKC suspended Sunday services

The management committee of MKC held urgent meeting and decided to suspend the church's Sunday worship for two consecutive weeks. This is to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in our country.

- ◆ Sunday service, big meetings, and conferences were temporarily halted.
- ◆ Believers are advised to continue fasting, prayer, and worship at home.
- ◆ During this difficult time, pastoral advices (1-2 pages) are written in local languages shared with church members via Facebook, email and telegram twice a week. These messages are biblical, related to current issue, and intended to teach, encourage, and advise church members.
- ◆ MKC developed ministerial guidelines for local churches

## Mobilizing resources for MKC prison ministry

MKC has started prison ministry 24 years ago to provide holistic ministry to people in correction centers in different parts of the country. The prison ministry of the church mobilizes resources to undertake various activities. March 15/2020 is celebrated as Prison Ministry Day in MKC to create awareness about the ministry to all congregations and mobilize resources.

During the month, discipleship training was conducted in Asella prison for 40 prisoners.



## Leadership Training

Pastor Norm Dyck and Pastor Fanosie Legesse from Mennonite Church in Canada came and provided training for church leaders in Asella and visited Wollega Bible school at the beginning of the month. In Asella 112 fulltime ministers from 36 local churches. The training theme was God's covenant and His Kingdom. They were accompanied by Desalegn Abebe, MKC president who also shared MKC's new roadmap to the participants.

(from left to right: Norm, Desalegn, & Fanosie in Asella in traditional attire).



## Discussion on a joint peace building initiative

The leadership of Services along the Nile international Ethiopia visited MKC Head Office and discussion was held on how to work together on peace building activities in



communities affected by ethnic-based violence in the past.

(From left to right: pastor Kelbessa, Elias, Ursyla Fischer, Markus Fischer, & Tewodros)