

**Factors Sustaining the Growth of Local  
congregations: the case of the three congregations  
of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus  
(Addis Ababa, Dodola and Awassa, Tabor)**

**By**

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## **Dedication**

**This thesis is dedicated to**

**My beloved wife, Tirunesh Darussa Koyite and my children  
Nigussu and Mezmure for their sacrificially love and  
patience at my absence for the study abroad**

## Declaration

I Dawit Yohannes Wario, hereby declare that except the quotations taken from books and different sources that are acknowledged, this thesis is entirely my own original work.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## ACRONYMS

AAC	Addis Ababa Congregation
AAECMY	Addis Ababa Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
AAMYC	Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Church
AAS	Addis Ababa Synod
AD	Ano Domino/After the Birth of Jesus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBMYC	Bonga Bethel Mekane Yesus Congregation
CDP	Child Development Program
CES	Central Ethiopia Synod
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIE	Compassion International Ethiopia
CMP	Church Maturity Program
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CS	Central Synod
DASSC	Development and Social Services Commission
DEM	Danish Evangelical Mission
Dr.	Doctor
ECFE	Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia
ECMY	Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EOC	Ethiopia Orthodox Church
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
GTF	Gudina Tumsa Foundation
HIV	Human Immune Virus
KG	Kindergarten
Km	Kilo Meters
LCMS	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NCM	Norwegian China Mission
NES	North Ethiopia Synod
NIV	New International Version

NKJV	New King James Version
NLA	NORSK LÆRERAKDEMI (Norwegian Teachers Academy)
NLM	Norwegian Lutheran Mission
MLC	Memorial Lutheran Church
Mr.	Mister
Mrs.	Mistress
O.I	Oral Interview
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PLWHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
Rev.	Reverend
SCES	South Central Ethiopia Synod
SEAW	South East Area Work
SEM	Swedish Evangelical Mission
SES	South Ethiopia Synod
SGGS	Sidamo Gamo Gofa Synod
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
SWS	South West Synod
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UPGs	Un-reached People Groups
USA	United States of America
WBS	Wabe Batu Synod
WS	Western Synod

## Glossary

Ato:	Mister, title of respect
Dejazmach:	Honorary title which means commander of the gate, a politico- military title below ras
Fitawurari:	the leader of the front, or the one who leads the army from the front side
Gabar:	a tribute- paid by a peasant or peasants to the landlords
Kegn Azmach:	a political title for the army who leads the right wing.
Ras:	literally means “head”, “top”, “summit”; a politico- military title for the main commander
Woreda	Administrational structure next to Zone



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## Introduction

By using a quotation from Donald A. McGavran, the founder of Church growth theology, Dr. Sakari Pinola explains the reason why the Church of Jesus Christ exists on this earth:

*“The Church of Jesus Christ has been commanded by her Lord to proclaim the gospel to men and women in every situation. Her mandate is nothing less than the making of all nations His disciples... It is her very nature to be an outward-looking fellowship of witnesses.”<sup>1</sup>*

The growth of a Church is a natural outcome of her life and existence. As far as the Church is on this earth with this mandate and lives for the fulfilment of her calling, her growth is real. On the other hand, when the Church forgets her calling and the mandate she is given; her growth can hardly be seen.

This thesis will be assessing some of the factors promoting the growth of local congregations as well as hindrances to their growth. Three congregations of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) are used as samples to look into these factors. The factors are summarised and discussed in one chapter rather than discussing them according to the congregation they refer to. This is because I have found that this would be too vast to discuss separately according to the congregation they refer. Therefore, I took only the major ones widely shared by the three congregations. However, I took some examples from these congregations where it is necessary.

By outlining these factors, my aim is to identify them and to let other local congregations identify them easily and make use of factors promoting the growth of their own local congregations and be aware of the hindrances in order to tackle them in due time. Being aware of them is assumed to contribute positively for taking pertinent action against factors that derail the church from its noble path.

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the methodological chapter that gives the basic background for the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Pinola, Sakari 1995: 99

Moreover, theoretical frame work and some definitions are also given in this chapter.

Chapter two is a background chapter which discusses a brief history of Ethiopia, the EECMY and the three Synods from which the three congregations are selected as samples. The chapter also describes shortly how Christianity and Protestantism were introduced to Ethiopia.

The third chapter focuses directly on the three congregations. A brief history that includes their establishment, activities, and growth is given here.

The following three major rationales justify and initiate the discussion of the three congregations.

1. To let readers know in which country, Church and Synods that the three selected congregations are operating.
2. To let readers fully know and understand who the selected congregations are, what they are doing and how they have grown.
3. Knowledge of the three congregations would enable readers to see the factors of growth and hindrances in perspective.

Chapter four is the main chapter presenting the factors contributing to the growth of local congregations. In this chapter the thesis statement and research questions will be addressed. Moreover, the reasons for the growth of local congregations will be outlined.

Chapter five will present the hindrances to the growth of local congregations. Finally, in chapter six, I will summarize the thesis and present recommendations for the growth of local congregations.

All the Bible quotations are taken from New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise mentioned.

## Chapter One: Research Methodology

### 1.1. Background and Objective of the study

When a research work is undertaken, it has its own aim and purpose. As Berg describes, the reason for doing research *“is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures.”*<sup>2</sup> A researcher does his/her own research having critical questions in mind, which finally lead him/her to arrive at some answers. The answers for the researcher’s questions are the end result of the work. In the process of finding answers for the questions, the researcher has to follow or apply systematic procedures.

To know why some churches are growing or why some are not growing is an interesting topic that invites every one to learn more about it. Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, churches in the developing countries are experiencing growth while churches in the developed countries are declining and the growth is very slow.

Research has revealed that many thousands are abandoning the churches in developed countries every day while many thousands are flocking to the churches in developing countries that have crowded it with many new converts and believers. The new believers and converts in the developed countries are rarely observed, rather the opposite is true: believers abandoning the Church.

My informant from Norway pointed out the following reasons why people have been abandoning churches in the developed countries. At the time of World War II, many were attending the churches, but after that people were busy with building the country. As they were busy with the building of the country, some have declined going to churches. Secondly, being materialistic has occupied the thoughts and ideas of many people therefore they have forgotten God in the process. Thirdly, the economic growth of the developed countries has paved the way for the people to become rich and they lost the eagerness to go to churches. Fourthly, the Enlightenment period also brought a new idea that all can be understood by reasoning. Whatever people want to

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<sup>2</sup> Berg, Bruce L 2001: 6

know can be explained by science; therefore, there is no need of faith and God.<sup>3</sup>

For the declining trend of churches in the developed countries, the Church of Norway can be taken as an example. According to web pages, 83% of the total population of the country are members of the Church, but about 100 people are only attending each service per week. According to the available statistics up to 2005, there were decline in baptism of newborns, young people confirmation, and weddings conducted through the Church: baptism fell from 96.8% in 1960 to 75.9% in 2005, confirmation fell from 93% in 1960 to 66.2% in 2005, and weddings fell from 85.2% in 1960 to 45.5% in 2005.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas, even though it is hard to find the exact statistics for the baptism, confirmation of young people and weddings in the Ethiopian churches, the number of believers are increasing every year. For example, the members of EECMY in 1959 were about 20000, but at the end of 2007 have reached 4,849,157.

To find out the reasons for the declining trends of churches in the developed countries and the rapid growth of churches in developing countries requires a thorough research and it is time consuming as well as beyond the scope of this thesis.

Even though it is interesting to know why the churches in the developing countries are growing and those in the developed countries are declining, the purpose of this study is not to find out answers for these questions. But as the churches in Ethiopia are part of the developing countries, I would like to concentrate my focus on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, restricting myself to three congregations in the EECMY and find out possible reasons for their rapid growth.

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<sup>3</sup> Pastor Reidar Paulsen o. i: 18/02/08 and 02/05/08. Pastor Reidar Paulsen is a pastor of Kristkirken in Bergen, Norway

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.kirken.no/english/engelsk.cfm?artid=5276:](http://www.kirken.no/english/engelsk.cfm?artid=5276)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_Norway#History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Norway#History)

The ECMY<sup>5</sup> was officially established as a national Church on January 21, 1959 with the total membership of 20000.<sup>6</sup> After 49 years of establishment, the membership of the Church, according to 2007 statistics, has grown to 4,849,157, out of which 2,036,851 are communicant members. The number of few congregations at the beginning has increased tremendously and has become more than five thousands. At present the Church has 20 Synods and three Area Works all over the country through which she accomplishes her ministry.<sup>7</sup>

It would have been good if I am able to find the reasons for the growth of all the congregations of the EECMY. But with the limited time and resources, this is unthinkable. Rather I have limited myself to three congregations. They are: Addis Ababa congregation- in Central Ethiopia Synod (CES), Dodola congregation- in Wabe Batu Synod (WBS), and Tabor congregation- in South Central Ethiopia Synod (SCES).

Briefly I will present a comparative analysis of these congregations in the area of numerical growth and also try to point out what makes one congregation different from the other one. Possible factors that contribute to the growth of local congregations and hindrances to their growth as a whole will be outlined and discussed. Findings from these congregations could be used as possible tools to promote the growth of local congregations of the EECMY and elsewhere in the world by testing their pertinence according to the context.

When we speak of the growth of local congregations, it is obvious that we also speak of the evangelistic work of them for they are interwoven like the double faces of the same coin that cannot be separated. Therefore, in this study, we will also closely look at how these congregations are undertaking

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<sup>5</sup> The official name of the Church at the time was ECMY- “Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus” in Ethiopia, because the Church did not gain her status as a national Church at that time. The Church gained the status of a national Church after a hard struggle with the Orthodox Church and then the word “Ethiopian” was added. The meaning of the name of the Church- Mekane Yesus is “the dwelling place of Jesus or where Jesus abides.”

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.eecmy.org/EECMY\\_History.pdf](http://www.eecmy.org/EECMY_History.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [www.eecmy.org](http://www.eecmy.org)

the evangelization of un-reached groups of people in their respective areas and beyond.

In this study, my thesis will focus on two major themes. They are:

1. To find out factors promoting the growth of local congregations in the EECMY, mainly focusing on the three selected congregations mentioned above.
2. To find out hindrances to the growth of local congregations.

## **1.2. Motivation for the study**

I was motivated to do this research for several reasons. I was born and raised in a Christian family. I attended Sunday school from the very beginning of my childhood. I have been serving in the EECMY up to now in different capacities at different places. I have served as Development worker, Water technician, District leader, Coordinator for the Youth and Children Ministry; Coordinator for the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and Church Maturity Program (CMP) before I was called to the full time ministry in the local congregation, both as evangelist and pastor. As I travelled across the country for the ministries of the EECMY, I had the opportunity to learn about the activities and ministries of the Church and her growth.

Many local congregations have been planted at several places across the country, even in the Muslim dominated areas like Jijiga and Afar. The local congregations of EECMY are heavily involved in evangelizing the various un-reached ethnic communities in their surrounding areas throughout the country. This endeavour shows how the congregations are growing both spiritually and numerically. When one sees such growth, it raises the question: 'what are the factors behind this growth?'

The three congregations mentioned above are selected with the different purposes in their own right as it will be highlighted below.

Addis Ababa congregation is the oldest congregation in the EECMY that was planted in 1904 by the pioneering evangelistic work of Rev. Karl Cederqvist from the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) even before the EECMY was officially established as a national church. Therefore, she has been looked at by other congregations of EECMY as a mother congregation. She has been expanding for the last 105 years. Prominent persons like the

late Dr. Emmanuel Gebre Selassie and Emmanuel Abraham who led the Church and played great role for her growth were from this congregation. She represents the growth of congregations in the capital and congregations in the ministry for a century. The details will be given in chapter three.

Dodola congregation is a congregation in the midst of a predominantly Muslim area, which has been expanding for more than fifty five Years. She was established as a congregation after the pioneering work of the Danish Evangelical Mission (DEM) which arrived in 1952 in the Bale area. This congregation represents the growth of congregations in the midst of highly Muslim dominated areas and those in the ministry for about half a century. The details will also be given in chapter three.

Tabor congregation was established as a congregation in 1996. She is a young and dynamic congregation in reaching out to the un-reached groups of people in her surroundings and far beyond. She represents the growth of semi-urban congregations and young congregations in the ministry for about 15 years. Again the details will be given in chapter three.

Sociologically, investigating and expounding the growth of these three congregations will help us to see how at different times God has been working in His Church using human beings as a tool. Human beings have been the working channels for God, and He will continue empowering them by His Holy Spirit for the expansion of His Kingdom on this earth.

### **1.3. Thesis Statement and Research Questions**

It has been said by many researchers that research problem or statement and research questions are linked together. The research problem or statement focuses on the reason why we do the research and what needs to be accomplished while the research questions are the means to find answers for the problem identified by the researcher. Creswell wishes to call the research problem a *“need for the study.”*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Creswell, John W 1998: 94

Research questions by nature are, *“open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms; start with words such as ‘what’ or ‘how’ rather than ‘why’.”*<sup>9</sup>

In this work the purpose of my study is to find out factors promoting the growth of local congregations as well as hindrances to their growth. These factors may be different from context to context and according to the size of the congregations. There are also some factors that all congregations are sharing. Chapter four and five will describe factors promoting the growth and hindrances that all the three congregations share.

The issues of growth of local congregations have to be addressed in connection with their evangelistic activities. Therefore, the following research questions are developed for this purpose.

1. What makes the congregations of EECMY grow fast?
2. How do these three congregations practice evangelistic activities?
  - What methods have been used?
  - How do they organize the work of evangelizing the un-reached groups of people?
  - What are some of the driving forces for evangelizing other groups of people?

#### **1.4. Research Method**

Research methodology is a wider term used in research work. It *“usually refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research.”*<sup>10</sup> Researchers mainly use two methods for their research work depending on the disciplines they have chosen for their research. These two methods are called the “Quantitative” and “Qualitative” methods.

The quantitative method is usually *“associated with surveys and statistics.”* It is more *“extensive”* than *“intensive”* with *“many units and few variables and with a systematic registration and processing of data.”* *Qualitative methods are more intensive, with few units and more information*

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<sup>9</sup> Spradley in Creswell, John W 1998: 99

<sup>10</sup> Blaxter, Loraine et al 2006: 58

*about each of them.*<sup>11</sup> The qualitative method is more applicable than the quantitative method for the study related with the society. As my study is related with the society within the local congregations, I will apply the qualitative method as a general tool for this study and specifically will follow the historical method for the description of the historical background of the three selected congregations to investigate what initiated the research problem. In applying the qualitative method, I will use participant observation, unstructured interviews and text analysis. By using the above tools I will substantiate my findings so that it would have an indepth explanatory power.

### **1.5. Literature Review**

Literature review is one of the methods a researcher uses to be acquainted with the literatures others have covered in the area of the study. This enables him/her to avoid the redundancy of ideas and will help him/her to focus more on the area of his/her interest.

Many writers have written voluminous books, journals, articles and magazines on the EECMY and her growth. Among them Gustav Aren is the pioneer. In his two volumes of books entitled "*Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, 1978*" and "*Envoys of the Gospel in Ethiopia: In the steps of the Evangelical Pioneers, 1999*" has covered the evangelical pioneers work in Ethiopia from the very attempt in 1826 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from England Church aiming to work with the already existing Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), hoping to revive her even though the attempt failed because of the resistance from the Church up until the indigenous leaders, like Onesimos, Gebre-Egziabher, and others evangelised the country from the West.

Olav Sæverås, in his book "*On Church-Mission Relations in Ethiopia 1944-1969 with special reference to the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Lutheran Missions, 1974*" also has covered the mission work of the Lutheran missions from the time before the Italian occupation of the country to

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<sup>11</sup> Hellevik in Lindheim, Tone 2000: 9

the Integration of Church, the EECMY and the Missions. Particularly he is looking into the relationship between missions' societies and the church.

Ato Emmanuel Abraham, in his book entitled "*Reminiscences of My Life, 1995*" has expounded more about the birth of the EECMY and her Synods as well as some congregations such as Addis Ababa congregation. Arne Tolo, "*Sidama and Ethiopian: the Emergence of the Mekane Yesus Church in Sidama, 1997*" has discussed the emergence of Mekane Yesus Church in Sidama and the NLM's Mission work in the same area.

Øyvind M. Eide, in his book "*Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The growth and persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85, 2000*" specifically has discussed about the Ethiopian Revolution and its impact on the EECMY and how the Church survived through severe persecution from 1974 to 1985. Johnny Bakke, in his book "*Christian Ministry: Patterns and Functions within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, 1987*" has covered pre Christian era, the introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia, the ministry of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Lutheran missions ministry as well as the inception, growth and ministry of the EECMY until and in the time of Revolution.

In the area of the three congregations I used much of interviews, magazines, and annual reports. Addis Ababa congregation has produced a magazine for her 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Evangelistic work which I used as main source. The book entitled "*Stories of Bale: Religious Development and Evangelical Christianity, 2005*" edited by Henrik Petersen was a valuable book for knowing the development of Evangelical Christianity in Dodola area as well as the whole Bale. In addition, I have used also some Internet sources.

## **1.6. Concepts and Definitions**

This study is focused on the growth of local congregations, which is connected to their evangelistic activities. As we describe the growth of local congregations, it is obvious that we also talk about their evangelistic activities. Therefore, this study can be understood as a part of a missiological study. By missiological study we mean a study that focuses on the mission of the church.

The Church is a spiritual body of Christ. Christ has come to this world with a mission. After having finished his mission on earth, he entrusted that mission or responsibility to the Church. Therefore, the Church is here on this earth to accomplish this task.

Terms like “Missiology”, “Mission”, “Great Commission”, “Church” and “Local Congregation” will appear in this study in one way or the other. Therefore, it is good to give their definition and how I use some of them in this paper.

### **1. 6. 1. Missiology**

According to Hesselgrave Missiology *“is the study of the mission of the Church.”*<sup>12</sup> The Church is entrusted with mission from God who is the owner of the mission. To study the mission of the Church is also to study the growth of the Church. Mission and evangelism are two inseparable terms linked together in the Great Commission. The mission of the Church on this earth is to fulfill the Great Commission given to her. Great Commission is a matter of going out to the whole world to proclaim the good news to all nations and make them disciples of Jesus Christ.

### **1.6.2. Mission**

There are a lot of definitions of mission depending on its context. In this study our focus will be on God’s mission, which He entrusted to the Church. Hesselgrave, quoting Donald McGavran, the father of Church Growth, defines the term mission as:

*“Mission is an enterprise devoted to proclaiming the good news of Christ and persuading men to become disciples and dependable members of his Church.”*<sup>13</sup>

One may ask who is the originator of mission, and for what purpose it was originated? To give a short and precise answer for these questions, the originator was God Himself. Zachariah makes clear this idea when he states,

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<sup>12</sup> Hesselgrave, David J 1987: 45

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 41

*“Mission originates in the mystery of the will of God. God is a God of Mission. The mission is God’s mission, not the Church’s mission. And His mission concerns the whole creation, the whole humankind, the whole span of life, the whole of history. Nothing is outside his mission. Eph. 1:9-10; 4:13, 16.”<sup>14</sup>*

Because the mission of God starts with Jesus, some times people may think the founder of mission is Jesus. But in reality Jesus was not the founder of mission. The founder of mission was God Himself and Jesus was sent by God to accomplish God’s mission. Jesus himself acknowledged and received God’s mission (Jn. 20:21). God’s plan included,

*“establishing the Church, the creation of the universe, preservation of it, redeeming of the fallen humankind, sanctifying it, judging the world and guiding it.”<sup>15</sup>*

In sending his son, Jesus Christ, to this world God’s mission is *“to unite all things in him”* in the fulness of time (Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10). Therefore, mission is defined as *“a commissioning or sending of a person or group of persons to perform and accomplish a specific task.”<sup>16</sup>* The mission of the Church is based on this specific task and objective, reuniting all humankind to God.

Actually the Early Church was undertaking this responsibility up to 500 AD. In the Middle Age, the mission work was done mainly by the Catholic Church through nuns and monks who traveled all over Europe preaching and teaching the gospel. Monasteries were functioning as mission stations, offering teaching and health care programs. For example, Norway and other Scandinavian countries have received the gospel in the Middle Age time, before the year 950.<sup>17</sup> When we come to the reformation time, it seems that

*“The reformers of the sixteen and seventeenth centuries recovered the message of the Church, but (for the most part) were too preoccupied with the problems of Europe to give much impetus to the mission in other parts of the world. It was the Pietists, Moravians, and*

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<sup>14</sup> Zachariah, Mathai 1982: 82

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: pp 5-6

<sup>16</sup> Ibid: 90

<sup>17</sup> Latourette, Kenneth Scott 1953: 383, 385ff

*a Baptist by the name of William Carey who recovered the sense of urgency to take the gospel to the whole world.*<sup>18</sup>

### **1.6.3. The Great Commission**

The Church is called to be a co-worker of God in building a new humanity in Christ Jesus. To accomplish this task, the mission of the Church starts from the Great Commandment given to her, which is called the Great Commission. Therefore, the Great Commission is *“the marching order of mission, and it presents us with specific tasks of the churches mission in the clearest form.”*<sup>19</sup> The Church fulfills this commandment not only because it was ordered to do so, but because of the *“very nature and act of God, who is essentially a missionary God, the nature of Biblical message of salvation, and the nature of Christianity.”*<sup>20</sup>

### **1.6.4. The Church**

As mentioned earlier, the Church is the body of Christ, which is the spiritual body, and it is a fellowship small enough to meet in a house and can be called ekklesia- "the ones who are called out", e.g. Rom 16:5; Philemon 2.<sup>21</sup> This spiritual body of Christ, the Church, can be called a local Church as we see in Rom 16:4; I Cor 1:2; Col 4:16; I Thess 1:1; II Cor 8:1; and the Universal Church. The local churches are the visible churches called by the local names according to the countries to which they belong, whereas the Universal Church is the totality of the invisible Church. The Universal Church

*“is not the council or assembly of different churches, but is the one Church which acknowledge through the Nicene Creed- (i) One, (ii) Holy, (iii) Catholic (Christian) and, (iv) Apostolic Church.”*<sup>22</sup>

In the New Testament, the word ‘Church’ is used *“to denote the universal church as well as local churches.”*<sup>23</sup> Local churches are churches in a given local places, and they are called local congregations.

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<sup>18</sup> Hesselgrave, David J 1987: 30

<sup>19</sup> Zachariah, Mathai 1982: 90

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 1

<sup>22</sup> Ibid: 5

According to EECMY, the Church is the body that is organized at the national level. Whereas the fellowships gathered at different localities are called local congregations. Therefore, in this paper, when we speak of the Church specifically in relation to the EECMY, we are talking about the national Church, the EECMY. For the rest we use the term congregations.

Strictly speaking, the Central office and Synod offices are not Church by themselves. They are coordinating structures and administrative bodies that facilitate holistic ministry of the Church throughout the country as well as the evangelistic work of the local congregations. The true churches are the local congregations planted at different localities. Zachariah makes it clearer:

*“When today we speak of the church, we normally do not think of the local congregation, but the diocesan or synodical or national level church body or denominational church.... But the fact of the matter is that the real church is the local congregation and the diocesan level churches are only administrative units of the local congregations.”<sup>24</sup>*

#### **1.6.5. Local Congregation**

Literally local congregation means “*a body of Christian believers.*”<sup>25</sup> But it is more than that. It is a body that unites with the Lord Jesus. Zachariah has more to say:

*“A local congregation is not a ghetto or a ‘mission compound’ or a protected sanctuary guarding itself against outside contamination either with a snobbish mentality or with an inferiority complex of minority feeling. A local congregation must be an open community without demarcations. It is placed in the world like salt or leaven in the dough.... A local congregation is at the service of the world. It discovers its existence and mission by being at the disposal of the world in which God through Christ and the Holy Spirit is present and*

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 81

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid: 1

*active and is leading it to its ultimate destiny. The mission of a local congregation is to promote this realisation.*<sup>26</sup>

## **1.7. Procedure for Data Collection**

Depending on the way the data are categorized, there are two methods to follow for gathering data. These are: Secondary data and primary data. If we follow the first approach and collect data, that data *“is said to be collected from the secondary sources, whereas the sources used in the second approach are called primary sources.”*<sup>27</sup> The secondary sources are sources that are collected from books, journals, magazines, articles, etc., and the primary sources are the findings directly from the community by using the qualitative interviews. This is basically the attitudes and feelings the community has towards the research questions. In this work both methods are applied because as Kumar says: *“None of the methods of data collection provides 100 per cent accurate and reliable information.”*<sup>28</sup> By using them together, they will complement each other.

The four methods used by Qualitative researchers to collect data are applied in this work. They are: observation, interviews, books and document analysis, and recording and transcribing.<sup>29</sup>

### **1.7.1. Observation**

Primary data can be collected by using observation. *“Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place.”*<sup>30</sup> Sometimes when you conduct interviews, people may not be willing to tell you all the information you need. With such shortage of information, observation will fill the gap. The study reveals that there are two types of observation. These are: Participant observation and Non- participant observation.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid: 3

<sup>27</sup> Kumar, Ranjit 2005: 118

<sup>28</sup> Ibid: 119

<sup>29</sup> Blaxter, Loraine et al 2006

<sup>30</sup> Kumar, Ranjit 2005: 119

*“Participant observation is when you, as a researcher, participate in the activities of the group being observed in the same manner as its members, with or without their knowing that they are being observed. Non-participant observation, on the other hand, is when you, as a researcher, do not get involved in the activities of the group but remains a passive observer, watching and listening to its activities and drawing conclusions from it.”<sup>31</sup>*

As my study is connected to the community within the congregations, I have used both participant and non-participant observation methods. This was because there were times when I had to be part of what was going on in the congregations where I myself was participating in the activity. For example, I attended worship programs, prayer meetings and a conference held in one of the congregations. I observed how people were praying, worshipping God and I also observed a miracle happened in the conference. On the other hand, as a researcher, at times I had to place myself outside the activities and observe what was going on.

People usually react in different ways when they know they are being observed. Therefore, as a researcher, it was my duty to handle such a situation with great care. In some cases I made known to them that I am here to observe. Such kind of observation is called *“controlled observation”*. At times I was conscious not to let them know that I was observing; this is called *“natural observation.”*<sup>32</sup>

By natural observation, it was my responsibility not to be biased with what I was observing. In the observation process it is also possible to record what one is observing. I did not do that for the sake of having smooth communication with the congregations. I only recorded interviews that were given me voluntarily. I have tried to assess systematically what I observed and how it occurred.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid: 120

<sup>32</sup> Ibid: 121

### 1.7.2. The Interview

Interview is another method of collecting information from people. As we interact with people, we often gather information from them in different ways.

*“Any person-to-person interaction between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview.”<sup>33</sup>*

Interviews can be done in two ways: By way of Structured interviews and Unstructured interviews. The nature of unstructured interviews is

*“flexible interview structure, flexible interview contents, and flexible in interview questions.” Whereas that of the Structured interviews are, “Rigid interview structure, Rigid interview contents, and Rigid interview questions and their wording.”<sup>34</sup>*

In my study, I made use of the unstructured interviews method. In the unstructured interviews, the researcher has a freedom of *“providing the terms of content and structure”* of the interviews in addition to *“the sequence”* he/she wishes to present. He/she also has *“the freedom in terms of the wording”* and *“explaining questions to his/her respondents, or formulate questions and raise issues on the spur of the moment”*, depending upon what occurs to him/her in the context of discussion.<sup>35</sup>

Sixteen people were involved in the face-to-face interview process from the three congregations and their respective Synods.

From Tabor Congregation, I selected six people- a pastor, an administrator, elders' chairperson and two members for they have been in this congregation from her inception until now, except Dr. Kebede Mulatu who came to this congregation in 2002 and working with the leaders on the area of Agriculture-mission. The reason I have chosen them is that all of them have enough knowledge about how, when, and why this congregation was established and what she has been

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid: 123

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

performing. They are well acquainted with the factors for her growth and the hindrances.

From Addis Ababa congregation, I have interviewed only two persons- a pastor and an administrator. This is because they have provided me with the written document I can use for my thesis. All that I need concerning the congregation was already documented in the magazine prepared for the 100th anniversary of the congregation. The interview was made only to fill the gap.

From Dodola congregation I have interviewed three persons. One of them has been in Dodola from the very beginning of the arrival of DEM and he is a good resource person. The rest two know well about the activities of the congregation, and one of them is among the first believers from the local community and he has a lot of knowledge about the area.

In addition, I have interviewed four leaders of two Synods- the SCES and WBS. Since I have found enough written documents to know about the CES and they have also given me some written documents, I have not interviewed any one from this Synod. I have also interviewed one pastor from Norway. The interview guide was prepared and I made use of them when I made interviews.

All the interviewees were asked for their willingness before the interviews were done, and all of them responded to my questions willingly. All the interviews were recorded on audio-tape that was transcribed afterwards. Notes were also taken as the interviews were conducted.

In addition to interviews and observation, collecting necessary documents both from the congregations and their respective Synods was carried out. These documents include minutes of meetings and official reports. Based on the interviews I have added some useful ideas and insights to the study from the observation and my previous knowledge of the Church.

## **1.8. Selection of Informants and Sampling**

Qualitative interviewing requires the involvement of people. Without people the interview cannot be done. Having the people by itself is not enough. The researcher has to have a method to identify or select his/her respondents. In this study I identified my informants according to their age, the position they have in the congregation and the synod, for example, pastor, administrator/leader, elders' board and members. All the informants were more than 40 years old and they have enough experiences in the area of Church work. Because of the area and some sensitive issues raised by my informants from Dodola congregation, in this thesis, I did not mention their names. Instead I have given them a code. For the first one I used, "informant A", for the second, "informant B", and for the third, "informant C."

## **1.9. Designing and Analyzing**

Any research work has to have its own design and the data must be duly analyzed. The reason why the data has to be analyzed is to make "*sense out of text and image data.*"<sup>36</sup> In this study the work is designed and analyzed in two ways. The first part was the time for observations and interviews, and analyzing the gathered information. The second phase of the work was the deskwork done at NLA after the field work. Books were referred for strengthening the data collected from the field work.

### **1.9.1. Data Analysis**

Analyzing data is a final step of a series of coding; achieving good reliability and validity.<sup>37</sup> To generate theories the collected data have to be analyzed, coded and organized into different categories as soon as they are collected. There are two ways to analyze data. They are: at the time of collection, and right after it has been collected.

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<sup>36</sup> Creswell, John W 2003: 190

<sup>37</sup> Hoyle, Rick H et al 2002

### 1.9.2. Analyzing Data at the time of Collection

The data are to be analyzed simultaneously at the time of collection or right after the interview. I have analyzed, wrote down some useful ideas as the interview was going on, or immediately after every session of interviews. This analysis was the feelings, ideas and thoughts that had come to my mind as I interviewed the people. These feelings and thoughts which had been written down as the interview was going on or after, had helped me to investigate more on that field. The more questions I posted to the interviewees for their own personal comments on the themes and for interpretations for what they had responded, the better was the result and that had created good relationship for further investigations.

### 1.9.3. Analyzing Data after Collection

The collected data at the first hand are *“raw data or simply data.”* Before processing data the researcher has to be clear that his/her data are *“clean”* which means that they are *“free from inconsistencies and incompleteness.”*<sup>38</sup> If he/she is clear on this, the next step is the process of editing data.

*“Editing consists of scrutinizing the completed research instruments to identify and minimise, as far as possible, errors, incompleteness, misclassification and gaps in the information obtained from the respondents.”*<sup>39</sup>

After having checked for the cleanness of the data, the next step will be coding the data according to the nature of the data, whether the data are *“descriptive in nature”* or *“are generated through discrete qualitative categories.”*<sup>40</sup> After the data are collected and coded they have to be broken down into pieces and then put back together in a new form to be compared and categorized. This will be done after they have been broken down and tested carefully. By comparison, the collected and coded data will help to find the similarities and differences between the data through different means.

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<sup>38</sup> Kumar, Ranjit 2005: 220

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: 222

I took some time before I began to write down my thesis to go through the data I have collected through interviews, observation and the written one to categorize them accordingly and collect the same ideas in one place so that I can put them into my thesis wherever I want to use them.

### **1.10. Limitations of the Study**

There are a lot of reasons to do a research on the growth of local congregations focusing on how they are performing evangelization of the unreached groups of people.

In Ethiopia there are diversified local churches under different evangelical denominations. All of these congregations are experiencing fast growth as well as doing a wonderful job in the area of evangelizing the unreached groups.

If we take the EECMY in particular, there are more than five thousand local congregations affiliated with this Church. One can imagine how difficult it can be to look into the growth of all these congregations, for it requires several years, thorough investigations and detailed study. Even within the limited time span and scarce resource, I have found that it was time consuming and a lot of work to find out the reasons for the growth of the three selected congregations. Leaving out the thorough and detail research why the churches in developing countries are experiencing fast growth for further study, I hereby present a brief investigation of my work on the three congregations. I am not concluding that what I have done is adequate and that there is no need of further investigation to know what sustains growth in these three selected congregations. The study I have undertaken may lay a good foundation on which one can develop further research. Therefore, I invite others to continue along the same line I have started and add on to what I have investigated.



## Chapter Two: Brief Historical Background

In this chapter the general overview of the Ethiopian history, how Christianity and Protestantism came to the country and the short history of EECMY will be presented. In addition, the chapter will assess the history of the respective Synods of the three selected congregations (Addis Ababa, Dodola and Tabor).

The presentation of the history of Ethiopia, the coming of Christianity and Protestantism to the country, is only a birds-eye-view presentation. The reason is that many writers and researchers have done a lot in these fields and what I wanted to do here is only to highlight the history so that this would give us a background to look at the factors promoting the growth of the local congregations and hindrances to their growth.

### 2.1. Ethiopia

The legend tells us that the historical foundation of Ethiopia, especially of the Abyssinian<sup>41</sup> kingdom, goes back more than three thousand years, which may take us to one of the longest recorded histories in the world. According to the World Fact book prepared by CIA for 2007, Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries in the world aging at least two thousand years.<sup>42</sup> Whether Ethiopia is 3000 or 2000 years old, the point is that the country has a long history.

The first modern attempt of forming the Abyssinian kingdom in the northern part of the country was done in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D in Axum, Tigray, which was called the Aksumite Kingdom. Christianity was said to be introduced to this kingdom in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the rise of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Aksumite kingdom could not expand to the South, West and East. Rather it became weak and restricted only to the northern part. But around the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Zagwe dynasty or as it used to be called, the Solomonic dynasty, came to power and expanded southward.

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<sup>41</sup> Abyssinia is the name of the homelands of the Amhara and the Tigre in the northern and central highlands of Ethiopia. The Amhara and Tigrinya speaking highlanders also called themselves Habesha (Aalen, Lovise 2000: 2)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

There was an era of princes or Zemene Mesfint<sup>43</sup> in between the time of Zagwe dynasty and the modern Ethiopia. The modern Ethiopia came into being in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dejazmach<sup>44</sup> Kassa Hailu, who was later crowned as Emperor Tewodros II, tried to unify the country, but could not finalise it because he died before his dream was fulfilled. His successor, Emperor Yohannes, due to the intruders from outside (Egyptians, Italians, and the Mahdists) could not continue the plan of Emperor Tewodros II.<sup>45</sup>

Menelik II was the Emperor who laid the foundation for Ethiopia as it is found today by forcefully annexing the previously independent kingdoms in the southeast, South and West through a series of wars subjugating them by means of firearms he was granted by European powers.<sup>46</sup>

Ras<sup>47</sup> Teferi Mekonnen, who came to power in 1916 and later was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1930, was the successor of Menelik II after his death. Taking over the power, Emperor Haile Selassie I did a lot to modernize the country. The ministerial system and professional army were established by him. He also replaced the hereditary nobility with centrally appointed officials as regional administrators. The cash crop economy and the expansion of modern education were also introduced during his time.<sup>48</sup>

According to Merera, the country was accepted as a member of the League of Nations in 1923 and of the United Nations in 1945. The slave trade was banned at the time of Emperor Haile Selassie I in the 1920's. The written constitution was introduced in 1931 by the Emperor.<sup>49</sup>

Emperor Haile Selassie I was deposed from the throne by armed forces, demonstrations and strikes among civilians. Abraham quoting Merera

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<sup>43</sup> Zemene Mesafint (1769-1855) was a period of violent struggles among princes from Gojjam, Tigray, Wollo, etc. who were fighting for the control of Gondar, the imperial centre (Aalen, Lovise 2000: 3)

<sup>44</sup> Dejazmach means Commander of the gate, a politico-military title below *ras* (Tolo, Arne 1998: xv).

<sup>45</sup> Abraham Mengesha 2006: 15ff

<sup>46</sup> Ibid: 16

<sup>47</sup> Ras- literally it means "head", a politico- military title for the main commander.

<sup>48</sup> Abraham Mengesha 2006: 17

<sup>49</sup> Merera Gudina 2002: 68ff

describes the reason for the down fall of the Imperial regime as two fold. They are:

*“the historical and the immediate causes. The historical causes were: the background agrarian feudalism, the national inequalities, the unholy alliance between the Church and the State that marginalized the Muslims, the failure of the Imperial regime to transform the socio-economic and politics of the Country... The immediate causes were: the Wollo famine, which took the lives of hundreds of people, was consciously hidden by the regime, the oil price rise following the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and the regime’s sector Review policy of Education.”*<sup>50</sup>

After his deposition, the armed forces established a provisional military government in 1974. The Provisional Military Communist Government, which followed the Marxism and Leninism ideology, continued leading the country until it was toppled down in May 1991 by the joint Liberation Fronts: TPLF and OLF. The TPLF first made the Tigray Region free from the Dergue regime in 1989 and reorganized itself under the umbrella of Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). EPRDF is an ethnic based movement which has been leading the country to the present.

The present Ethiopia is a Federal Republic State that has 9 ethnically based states and 2 self-governing administrations: - the Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations. It is also a landlocked country found in eastern Africa, West of Somalia. It lost its coast line with the Eritrean independence on May 24, 1993. It is the only independent country in Africa that was not colonized except with the attempted occupation of Italians from 1936-41. Aalen confirms by quoting Teshale Tibebu

*“The Pan-African Movement considered Ethiopia to be ‘the shrine of enclosing the last spark of African freedom, the impregnable rock of black resistance against white invasion, a living symbol, and an incarnation of Africa independence.’”*<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Abraham Mengesha 2006: 18

<sup>51</sup> Aalen, Lovise 2000: 2

Ethiopia has been seen by many as “the island of Christianity.” Actually, it is not only the land of Christianity, but of other religions too. This is clear from the distribution of religions in the country according to the research done by Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE), in 2005: Christianity 62% (Orthodox 47.3%, Evangelicals 14.7%), Islam 35.4%, and Traditional religions 2.6%.<sup>52</sup> The total population of the country, according to the estimated census of 2007 by the CIA is, 76,511,887.<sup>53</sup>

## **2.2. The Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia**

The legend from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tells that Christianity came to Ethiopia at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century when the evangelist Philip preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch who was on his way back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem after finishing his worship (Acts 8:27-40). In addition, other sources also claim that on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, there were some Ethiopians who took part in the baptism of Holy Spirit and came back to Ethiopia and preached the Gospel. Some also argue that among Jesus’ disciples, Mathew came to Ethiopia for missionary journey, preached the gospel and died in Ethiopia, though there is no proof for this claim.<sup>54</sup>

However, from the written documents we know that Christianity was preached to Ethiopia in the early years of the Christian era in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (370 AD) to the Aksumite Kingdom in the northern part of the country.<sup>55</sup> Abba Selama Kesate Berhan (Father of peace and Revealer of Light), who formerly called Frumentius, shared the gospel to the then Ethiopian king, Ezana in Axum.<sup>56</sup>

Even though Christianity reached Ethiopia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the gospel was not preached clearly to the south for about 1880 years. It was restricted to the northern part of the country, except an attempt to reach Wolayita and Gamo Gofa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 52

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html>

<sup>54</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 15

<sup>55</sup> Gudina Tumsa Foundation 2003: 125ff

<sup>56</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 15

<sup>57</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NLM’s Mission Work in Ethiopia, a booklet by Rev. Tibo Arsicha: 1

Until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the EOC and government were one and the same. Where there was an official office for the ruling regime of the kingdom, there was EOC. The rulers often took with them priests from the EOC to establish their kingdom and allow the priests to open the Church in their vicinity.

The expansion of EOC to the South, West and East took place in 1865 with the colonizing and landlord systems. EOC tried to expand to West, East and South, but because of its many burdens like *gabar*<sup>58</sup> system and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, it was not accepted by the local people.<sup>59</sup> As it was described in the GTF, the expansion of EOC was only *“to show the faithfulness of those appointed to important positions in the government, rather than to proclaim Christ to the people in those areas.”*<sup>60</sup>

### **2.3. The beginning of Protestantism in Ethiopia**

Persons like Peter Heyling, Samuel Gobat and Rev. Johan Ludwig Krapf tried to enter the northern part of Ethiopia several times since 17<sup>th</sup> century. Peter Heyling was the first protestant missionary who came to Ethiopia towards the end of 1634 or early 1635 and studied the national language (Amharic) of the country and translated the Gospel of John into Amharic.<sup>61</sup> Samuel Gobat and Christian Kugler came to Ethiopia at the time of Zemene Mesafint in 1830.<sup>62</sup>

The aim of these missionaries was not to establish a new Church but to revive and work with the already existing Church, the EOC. Their trial failed due to the strong resistance from the EOC. Then Rev. Krapf went south as far as Showa province and settled at the town called Ankober where he found the Showa Oromo people. There he tried to evangelize the people and attempted to establish another Church. In the 1800 century many of the evangelical missionaries from Europe very much wanted to reach the Oromos with the gospel.

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<sup>58</sup> Gabar is a tribute- paid by a peasant or peasants to the landlords (Tolo, Arne 1998: xv)

<sup>59</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NLM's Mission Work in Ethiopia, a booklet by Rev. Tibo Arsicha: 1

<sup>60</sup> Gudina Tumsa Foundation 2003: 126

<sup>61</sup> Aren, Gustav 1978: 34, 35

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.eecmy.org/EECMY\\_history.pdf](http://www.eecmy.org/EECMY_history.pdf): Sæverås, Olav 1974: 15

Finally, it was the news and information heard from the aforementioned evangelists that drew many protestant Lutheran missions as well as other mission organizations like, Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, American Presbyterian and Sudan Interior Missions to Ethiopia to begin the work of evangelizing the country.<sup>63</sup>

In 2005, according to the research conducted by the ECFE, there were 29,805 local evangelical churches in Ethiopia. Out of this, 14,469 were well-established and the rest 15,336 were newly planted local churches. All these local churches had a total membership of 10,446,017 at the time when the study was made.<sup>64</sup>

Among the evangelical churches, Kale Heywot Church had the highest number of membership in 2005, which was 4, 535,000 and EECMY was the second largest Church among the evangelicals with the total membership of 4,118,033. The study goes on explaining that out of the total number of the evangelical Christians, 82.5% were under the age of 36, which signify that the majority of Ethiopian Evangelicals are Children and Youth (Children 47.73%, 0-14 years old and Youth 34.76%, 15-35%).<sup>65</sup>

#### **2.4. Short history of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus**

The birth of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (ECMY) came about, and as the result of, preaching of the word of God by Lutheran missions and indigenous evangelists in the early 1860s.

Lutheran Missions and indigenous evangelists launched the work of evangelising the Ethiopian society in the West, South and North as well as in the capital, Addis Ababa, which after some years laid the foundation for ECMY to be established at national level. The first founding meeting was held at Nekemet in 1944, which brought together leaders from Wollega, Kambata and Sidamo. They agreed to have this kind of meeting every year, which continued until 1957.

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<sup>63</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NLM's Mission Work in Ethiopia, a booklet by Rev. Tibo Arsicha: 2

<sup>64</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 56

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

The first formal attempt to form the Church nationally was made in April 1958. The delegates from the above mentioned areas held a meeting in Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus congregation (AAMYC) from April 23-25, 1958. The aim of the delegates was to discuss a draft constitution prepared by Dr. Herbert Schaefer and Rev. Manfred Lundgren, which was translated to Amharic in order to establish the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.<sup>66</sup>

The constitution was adopted on April 25, 1958, but the Church was not officially established before the 21<sup>st</sup> of January because of the request raised by the delegates from the Western Wollega congregations seeking for approval of their congregations.<sup>67</sup> The dream of establishing one national Church came to reality on January 21, 1959. Four Synods were the founding Synods of the ECMY: the Central Synod (CS), the Western Synod (WS), the South Ethiopia Synod (SES), and the Northern Ethiopia Synod (NES).<sup>68</sup>

Indigenous evangelists played a great role to the establishment and growth of EECMY. Qes Badima Yalew was one of them. He *“was born in Gojjam around 1885. About the turn of the century he came as deacon to the Orthodox Church at Bodji in Wollega, and was later ordained to the priesthood.”*<sup>69</sup> He taught in the boys’ school at Entoto, assisted Erikson in the revision of Amharic New Testament, in 1925. In 1941, he was called to be a pastor for the Evangelical Church, which later called AAMYC. He was also elected as the interim president for one year until the ECMY was officially formed in 1959.<sup>70</sup> Some of his major contributions for the Church were to give the Church its name (Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus- ECMY) and for two other institutions of the Church (Yemisrach Dimts<sup>71</sup> and Besrate Wongel).<sup>72</sup>

The EECMY has been serving in Ethiopia in the areas of evangelistic work and development and social services for the last 49 years. The major

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<sup>66</sup> EECMY 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary Magazine 1999: 6

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.elm-mission.net/english/data/aethiopiien/anniversary.pdf>: Emmanuel Abraham 1995: 244

<sup>68</sup> Launhardt, Johannes 2004: 145

<sup>69</sup> Ibid: 96

<sup>70</sup> Ibid: 97: Emanuel Abraham 1995: 245

<sup>71</sup> Yemisrach Dimts means “The voice of good news”

<sup>72</sup> Besrate Wongel means “Gospel Testimony”

services have been rendered by the Church were: Bible translation to some of the local languages of Ethiopia, Seminaries and Bible schools, basic schools including Literacy Education, Rural Development Projects, Medial work, Media communication- especially producing literature and Radio services for broadcasting the good news and other social issues that are relevant for the Ethiopian society, and of course, the Development and Social Services Commission (DASSC). All these activities of the Church have contributed a lot for her growth and significant development of the country thus far.

## **2.5. Central Ethiopia Synod**

The foundation stone for the establishment of Central Ethiopia Synod (CES) was laid in Yirgalem town at the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the EECMY held from 18-23, January 1973.<sup>73</sup> The necessity of establishing the Addis Ababa Synod (AAS) was brought to the attention of the Assembly because of the high demand for urban ministry.

As Addis Ababa was/is the capital for the country and its growth and development was high, the Lutheran congregations in the town wanted to have a coordinating office to make the evangelization of the city more effective.

The matter was endorsed by the Assembly and referred to the Church officers to effectuate it. The Church officers having followed the matter and prepared the ground for the establishment of the Synod (constitution and by-laws) called for the founding assembly. The assembly was held from 29-30 March 1974, and in the end of the meeting, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 1974 AAS, which is now called CES, was officially established with a total membership of 2971, out of which 1473 were confirmed members.<sup>74</sup>

Prior to the establishment of AAS, Lutheran congregations were working in the city since 1940s, planted by four Synods of the EECMY (The

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<sup>73</sup> Launhardt, Johannes 2004: 292ff

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

Central Synod, The Western Synod, The former South Ethiopia Synod, and the former Northern Ethiopia Synod).<sup>75</sup>

At the end of 2007, the CES had 301 congregations, 228,359 total membership, 142,793 communicants; 23 parishes, 208 outreach centres, 190 pastors, 185 evangelists, and 16,981 volunteers.<sup>76</sup>

## **2.6. Wabe Batu Synod**

The history of the establishment of WBS goes back to the coming of DEM to Bale region. The first missionary family (Mrs. Marianne and Mr. Hjalmar Andersen) sent by the mission arrived in Dodola in May, 1952. One of their responsibilities was to find a suitable place for the mission station, which they found at the central part of the town and rented a house there.

Their first plan was to go to Hebano of southwest Dodola. But they were told by the governor of Dodola province, Fitawurari<sup>77</sup> Woldemichael Buii, to remain in Dodola for Hebano is too far and difficult for smooth communication because there were no roads, telephone, and electricity.<sup>78</sup>

Even though Dodola was not part of one of the “open areas”,<sup>79</sup> the reason why the governor wanted the missionaries to remain in Dodola, as informant “A” explains, was because of the interest of the governor to modernize his area. The governor had observed the benefits of the presence of missionaries in other areas: where Christian missions established their work there were schools and clinics. Therefore, he discussed the issue with his colleague, Kegn Azmach<sup>80</sup> Tesema Yidengitu, and the local leaders. They agreed on the issue and convinced the missionaries to stay in Dodola. Finally

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<sup>75</sup> Rev. Giram Chaka, April 2008: Summary report about brief history of the establishment of CES. Rev Giram Chaka is the president of the Synod:

<sup>76</sup> Report presented to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting of the CES, Nov. 30- Dec. 1, 2007: 2

<sup>77</sup> Fitawurari means the leader of the front, or the one who leads the army from the front side.

<sup>78</sup> Informant “A” o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>79</sup> “Open Areas” were areas which not reached by the EOC and counted as where non-Christians are living. In contrast to “open areas”, there were the “Ethiopian Church Areas.” The “Ethiopian Church Areas” were areas inhabited by the believers and followers of the EOC, according to the religious regulations of the Imperial Ethiopian Government issued in 1944. (Gudina Tumsa Foundation 2003: 126)

<sup>80</sup> Kegn Azmach is a political title for the army who leads the right wing.

the governor granted them a permanent plot of land at a place called Lensho, a place of fertile soil and with enough water. The missionaries moved to it after six months.<sup>81</sup>

The mission work continued expanding to different areas and to that effect congregations were established. Mission stations were opened in areas like, Worqa, Hebano, and also the East Bale outreach work.

In 1965 the congregations and believers in Bale asked to merge with the Sidamo- Gamo Gofa Synod (SGGS). They sent their request to the SGGS board to which the board decided in favour of them and accepted to their Synod.

From 1965 until 1996, the mission work in Bale was run under the auspices of the former South Ethiopia Synod. In 1996, due to the reorganization of the former SES into three Synods and one Area Work, Bale mission work was transferred to the newly formed South East Area Work (SEAW).

The SEAW continued to organize the work in Bale until it was upgraded to Synod level in 2005, and with that the WBS was established officially on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 2005 with 33,414 members- out of which 11,205 were communicants, 3 main parishes and 1 sub parish, 64 congregations, and 92 outreach centres. The Synod had 15 pastors and 90 evangelists<sup>82</sup> at its establishment.<sup>83</sup>

The Synod currently has 68 congregations, 7 parishes, 105 outreach centres and the total membership of 39,884, out of which 16,278 are communicants. The Synod runs its work with 15 pastors, 19 paid evangelists, 53 voluntary evangelists, and 1497 volunteers'.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Petersen, Henrik 2005: 47- 48

<sup>82</sup> Out of 90 evangelists only 19 are paid by the Synod. The rest are voluntary evangelists, who either support themselves or by the local congregations but devoted themselves for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

<sup>83</sup> Ato Kefelegn Negash o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola. Ato Kefelegn Negash is an acting director for the Evangelism Department of WBS.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

## 2.7. South Central Ethiopia Synod

The present SCES located in Awassa is one of the Synods reorganized in a new form in 1996 after the former SES was divided into three Synods and one Area Work.

The former SES was the outcome of the work of Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) in the southern part of Ethiopia. NLM came to Ethiopia in 1948 after the mission work in China was closed down by the rise of communist regime. NLM was originally established by the group of young Norwegians with the motive of evangelizing China in 1891, and it was called Norwegian China Mission (NCM), until 1949.<sup>85</sup>

Searching for the mission work to be continued, NLM received an invitation from the SEM which was already working in Ethiopia. The SEM contacted the General Secretary of NCM, Tormod Vågen, in the spring of 1946 to fill the gap of evangelising the whole country.<sup>86</sup>

The NCM finally decided to send two representatives, Mr. Tormod Vågen and Rev. Olaf Lie to investigate the ground for the mission work to be started in Ethiopia. The representatives arrived in Addis Ababa in January 1948 and stayed two months in the country searching for possibilities to commence the mission work. They were granted permission to start the mission work in Ethiopia from the Imperial Government of Ethiopia just before they left for Norway.<sup>87</sup>

They reported about their trip and investigation to the mission board. The board decided to commence work in Ethiopia. Rev. Olaf Lie and Mr. Gudmund Vinskei were sent to Ethiopia.<sup>88</sup>

At the end of the same year, 12 additional missionaries came to Ethiopia to strengthen the mission work. The first group of four missionaries left for South Ethiopia on February 7, 1949 and arrived at Yirgalem on February 9, 1949.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Tolo, Arne 1997:135

<sup>86</sup> Ibid: 135ff

<sup>87</sup> Ibid: 137

<sup>88</sup> Ibid: 145

<sup>89</sup> 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NLM's Mission work in Ethiopia, a booklet by Rev. Tibo Arsicha: 3

Opening of basic and high schools, vocational and agricultural schools, Clinics, Hospitals, Bible schools, Teacher's Training centre, pastors and evangelists training centres, Theological Seminary, and Orphanage school were among the strategies used by the NLM beside the evangelism work. These were the driving forces for the spread of the Gospel.<sup>90</sup>

Within a year, congregations were established all over where the mission work was started and elders were elected for the newly established congregations.

A few years later because of additional congregations, in order to make a smooth communication and the work good leadership, parishes and Abiy Kofloch (Sub Synods) - the Sidamo, Gamo Gofa and Borena were established.

The first attempt to establish a synod was made in 1962 in Dilla town, and the first synod was called Sidamo- Gamo Gofa Synod.

Meanwhile, the congregations established in Bale region by the DEM sent their application to the SGGS board in 1965 to be merged with the Synod. Their application was approved by the synod board. Their acceptance to SGGS changed the name of the synod to South Ethiopia Synod. The head quarter of the Synod was moved to Awassa in October 1967 because Awassa was located at an intermediate place to all the ministries of the Synod.<sup>91</sup>

As the work was growing in order to create a favourable condition, the former SES was divided into three Synods and one Area Work. Prior to the reorganizing of the former SES, the South West Synod (SWS) was established in 1990. The three Synods reorganized in a new form in 1996 are: the South Ethiopia Synod situated in Hagere Mariam which took the former SES name; South Central Ethiopia Synod found in Awassa, and South East Area Work, which was established in Dodola. The SEAW has now become a Synod- the Wabe Batu Synod.

Currently SCES has 8 parishes, 1 area work, 1,137 congregations, 200 outreach centres, and the total membership of 492,972. There are 59 pastors, 149 evangelists and 52,743 voluntary ministers serving in the evangelism

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<sup>90</sup> Launhardt, Johannes 2004: 217; Tolo, Arne 1997: 145ff

<sup>91</sup> Ato Demeke Hamesso o. i: 04/10/07, Awassa

ministry of the Synod out of which 21 and 191 are pensioned pastors and evangelists respectively.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid



## Chapter Three: Brief History of the three congregations

### 3.1. Addis Ababa Congregation

Addis Ababa congregation is the oldest congregation of EECMY. She has celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> years of evangelistic work five years ago in 2004. She was established in 1904 as a congregation even before any evangelical church was established in Ethiopia. The name, Mekane Yesus was officially the name for the AAMYC and the EECMY took the name after she was established in January 1959.

The history of the establishment of AAMYC goes back to the coming of Rev. Karl Cederqvist, a missionary from Sweden in 1904. According to the magazine prepared for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation, his coming to Ethiopia was due to the invitation from his friend Onesimos that aimed to reach the Borana Oromo in the South.<sup>93</sup>

Cederqvist went to Somalia and reached the Somali coast in 1893. Though he tried to reach Borana, the turmoil in the area because of the Italians' occupation did not allow him. Finally he went back to Sweden until he received an additional invitation from Onesimos.<sup>94</sup>

When Cederqvist reached Addis Ababa on March 29, 1904, on the invitation from Onesimos, he could not find him. Onesimos himself had left for Wollega just one day before Cederqvist arrived in Addis Ababa. He then tried to find a place to settle. After some weeks of hardship, he finally found a place in the area called Kechene Medhane Alem Church neighbourhood. He rented a house and laid the foundation stone for the establishment of Addis Ababa congregation.<sup>95</sup>

He began preaching the gospel, opened a school to offer modern education and initiated a program for medical care. He is believed to be "*the first missionary sent to Addis Ababa to kindle the light of the gospel there.*"<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904- 2004): 37

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

Cederqvist endeavoured to proclaim the gospel, to educate the young generation and to give medical care for the poor and slaves including men and women until his death on November 11, 1919. He had, for instance, been serving a lot of people in Addis Ababa who had been suffering during the time of the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918.<sup>97</sup>

After his death, Rev. Olof Eriksson took the responsibility for the work. He baptized four Muslim boys on Saturday October 8, 1921, invited them and others who were associated with the mission to Holy Communion on the next morning. This marked the beginning of AAC.<sup>98</sup> Actually the congregation was officially established on October 16, 1921<sup>99</sup> after electing a council of elders for leadership.<sup>100</sup> After three months the membership of the congregation had increased to 35 people.

The premises of Wolete Yohannes Street (*siddist kilo*),<sup>101</sup> with the Church and other buildings on it was given to the congregation by the SEM, in 1947. In the same year the congregation received a generous gift of E\$30,000.00 from Emperor Haile Selassie I. The new Church building was erected in May 1950, and the congregation was accepted as a member of the Lutheran World Federation in 1957.<sup>102</sup>

As a mother congregation,<sup>103</sup> according to Ato Feleke, the administrator of the congregation, AAC was looked as the leadership

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid: 38

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Regarding the official year for the establishment of AAMYC, there are different suggestions. According to Launhardt, the official year for the establishment of AAMYC was in June 1941(see p.211 and the footnote). On the other hand, 1945 was also counted as a special year for the congregation because the elders celebrated the fortieth anniversary, which took the establishment of the congregation to 1905 (see Launhardt, Johannes 2004: 101 and the footnote). However, for the present elders of the congregation, the year for the founding of the congregation was 1904 when Cederqvist came to Addis Ababa and began the mission work.

<sup>100</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904- 2004): 38

<sup>101</sup> Literally Siddist Kilo means “Six Kilo.” The area was called by this name due to the sale of beef for Six Ethiopian Birr per kilo for first time in that area.

<sup>102</sup> Launhardt, Johannes 2004: 211

<sup>103</sup> The endearing epithet “Enaat Mekane Yesus,” literally “Mother Mekane Yesus” was given to AAC by the great evangelical churches “*in recognition of its service as a centre where*

congregation for the whole Mekane Yesus Church. Many of her members were leaders of the EECMY. For example, Ato Emmanuel Abraham and the late Dr. Emmanuel Gebre Selassie can be mentioned.<sup>104</sup>

Addis Ababa congregation has played a great role for the growth and development of EECMY. The following points are what AAMYC has contributed for the growth EECMY as well as for Evangelical churches in Ethiopia that indicates how she has developed and grown.

- The order of Sunday morning service, which has been used in the whole EECMY. The liturgical service she has developed from the very beginning of her establishment has been kept in its original form up until now.
- The founding of women's ministry
- Helping the congregations to become self-reliant
- Supporting the troubled congregations to overcome their difficulties
- Encouraging churches in various parts of Ethiopia to work together for the expansion of the kingdom of God and to reaching out to the un-reached groups of people in the country
- Played a great role in the establishment of a national Church, EECMY
- Contributed leaders like Ato Emmanuel Abraham and Dr. Emmanuel Gebre Selassie who led the EECMY for 26 years out of her 49 years of existence
- Led the way in institutionalizing Church administration, standardizing Church liturgy and hymnal, and organizing national outreach conferences
- Coordinated and provided translators for the mass evangelization held by the crew of Logos ship and other evangelists who came from abroad to the country at different times

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*various foreign missionaries and local evangelicals congregated for membership. The congregation convened annual conferences of evangelical Christians to discuss and devise strategies for evangelistic outreach and establish unity in spreading the gospel. The AAECMY soldiered on in this effort until 1959" (100<sup>th</sup> anniversary magazine: 35).*

<sup>104</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

- Provided a safe haven to evangelical churches in the various regions of the country when they faced difficult times to gather and worship
- Gathered the persecuted under its wings for protection<sup>105</sup>

Currently AAC congregation has 57 paid workers out of which 14 are involved in the evangelistic work. 5 of them are working at outreach areas whereas the rest 9 (7 evangelists and 2 pastors) are working in the congregation. There are also 5 development and social workers, 18 school teachers and workers, and 5 administration workers.

Addis Ababa congregation was founded in 1904 by the evangelistic work of Rev. Cederqvist. Three years, after the election of elders to the leadership on October 16, 1921, there were 35 registered members and was 150 Birr initial capital. At present the congregation has 1,874 members and an annual budgeted 1,320,260 birr.<sup>106</sup>

### **3.1.1. Major Services of Addis Ababa congregation**

Addis Ababa congregation has grown spiritually, physically and numerically. Spiritual, physical and numerical growths never come without influential factors. The following factors have been the major ones that caused the growth of the congregation.

#### **3.1.1.1. The School Work**

A foundation for the school work was laid by Rev. Karl Cederqvist. He immediately opened the school to teach young children for the purpose of helping them how to read and write. It was said that his school was the first modern school of its kind in the country preceding the school opened by Emperor Menelik II by two years.<sup>107</sup>

Even though Cederqvist opened a school in 1904, the organized school that incorporated secular and spiritual lessons was not started until he in 1913 bought a plot of land where the congregation is still found. The main

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<sup>105</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904- 2004): 35ff

<sup>106</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

<sup>107</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904-2004): 40

instructional media in the school was English. Therefore the school was called an “English School.”<sup>108</sup>

The assignment of Rev. Per Stjārne as a director for the Mission’s work in education was important. Now an additional school was opened specially for boys at a place called Entoto. That was a school for boys and had dormitories for the pupils. The school that first had been opened at AAC now became a school for girls.

From the beginning, the tuition was free for all the students. First in 1949, school fees of one birr per month were introduced. This was done “*to support expansion of the school to keep up with the rising demand for admission.*”<sup>109</sup> Two more schools were also opened at Abichu district, north of the capital, and in the Nefas Silk precinct of Addis Ababa hoping to offer modern education.

The school has been striving to produce morally upright and academically competent students to this date from preparatory and grades one through eight. At present, the school has 495 students.<sup>110</sup>

From the beginning, Bible lessons have been given for the students as one of the subjects. Therefore, the school children have a chance to hear to the word of God, which contributed a lot for the growth of the congregation for many of them came to know Christ and joined the congregation. Most of the students from this school have been leaders and ministers both for the congregation and the EECMY.

### **3.1.1.2. Women’s Ministry**

Addis Ababa congregation was the first congregation to begin women’s ministry. In 1925, Mrs. Thekla Nilsson, the Rev. Nils Nilsson’s wife opened a women program. The purpose was to worship the Lord Jesus together, and at the same time to train them how to do knitting and sewing.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

<sup>111</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904-2004): 41

The handicraft products from this training, in meantime, were sold on auction to raise funds and to support the evangelistic endeavour of the congregation.

*“The women’s ministry later was extended to help the needy, comfort the bereaved, and organize an annual event around Christmas time which brought together the Church family.”<sup>112</sup>*

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary magazine explains how the women’s ministry fulfilled the motto of the Church “*Serving the Whole Person.*” The women’s ministry “*established within their ministry a charitable association known as ‘Reddiet’ and charged it with the responsibility of financially supporting families of the deceased, comforting the bereaved with God’s word, and visiting the sick.*”<sup>113</sup>

Women’s work has been vital for the growth of the congregation. The women have played a great role in raising funds for the construction of a new Church building. They went door-to-door to collect money from wealthy merchants, charities, and other entities.

### **3.1.1.3. Care and Sponsorship**

Today the Addis Ababa congregation cares for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). In this way, her social work is important in fulfilling the holistic ministry of the EECMY. Since this ministry started, the congregation has been caring for 80 PLWHA. The work includes home visiting, comforting with the word of God, and the supply of necessary materials for survival- food and clothes.

Apart from HIV/AIDS, the congregation cares for 11 elderly people and gives sponsorship for 211 children. Thus the children have a chance to join school. Five College students are also sponsored by the congregation. The congregation has extended material assistance for the people persecuted due to the faith they have in Christ so that they may sustained in such difficult times of their lives.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> Ibid: 51

#### **3.1.1.4. Youth Training Centre and Self-reliance Project**

Eight young people have got a chance to be trained vocationally in the areas of hair-dressing, wood and metal work by the congregation in order to make them self-supporting. The congregation provides them with the start-up fund and some working hand tools when they finish their training, so that they can create their own jobs.

This activity was started at the time of Dergue regime because of the increase of jobless young people. One of the aims was to get the possibility of reaching them with the gospel of Lord Jesus.<sup>115</sup>

#### **3.1.1.5. Sunday School Children's Ministry**

The Sunday school Children's ministry was started as early as in 1946 with the aim of *“raising God-fearing, spiritually-knowledgeable, and morally upright children.”*<sup>116</sup> The school has been organized and conducted by a committee elected for this purpose in 1970. Since 1974 the ministry has a full-time minister who coordinates and superintends the endeavours of the committee. There are about 353 children attending the Sunday school classes and 27 volunteer teachers.

#### **3.1.1.6. Music Ministry**

Music ministry of AAC was started shortly after the establishment of the congregation. It was the printing of the first *Sebhat LeAmlak*<sup>117</sup> hymn book in 1924 by Rev. Olof Eriksson that paved the way for the establishment of this ministry.<sup>118</sup>

In 1945, a man by name Habte-Ab Wolde Mariam was given the mandate to train the young people in music and singing. This was the beginning of choir ministry. A committee which oversees music ministry was formed, to strengthen and expand of music ministry.

The committee went public and presented different songs at the then Haile Selassie I Theatre and even to the palace of the Emperor for which *“the*

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid: 52

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Sebhat LeAmlak means praise to God

<sup>118</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904-2004): 43

*Emperor presented to the choir a financial gift of about thirty thousand Birr.*<sup>119</sup>

The music committee has been directing different choirs (group of singers) formed in the congregation and presenting a yearly festival since its commencement.

Music and songs have a power to attract youth to churches. Therefore, nowadays almost half of the young people in the congregation are attracted to it due to the inspirational and life changing songs they often hear.

### **3.1.1.7. Outreach Work**

Evangelizing the un-reached groups of people has been the main task of the congregations of EECMY from the beginning of their establishment. Currently as other faith groups, for example, Islam is growing in the country; the urgency of reaching out to non-believers has been the main agenda and top priority in the evangelistic work for every congregation.

But AAC was not preoccupied with the outreach work from the very beginning. The entire work of the EECMY was viewed as carried out in part by the Church as the main leaders of EECMY were from this congregation. As Ato Feleke says,

*“Most of the leaders of EECMY were members of AAMYC and because of that except congregations established at the western part of the country, the rest were founded or established according to the structural style and leadership of this congregation.”*<sup>120</sup>

The congregation has been doing outreach work only for the last ten years. Within the last ten years of outreach, the congregation has planted fourteen outreach centres and preaching areas. These are: three in Bale, one in Harar, two in Selale, one in northern Showa, two in eastern Showa, two in western Showa, and three in Addis Ababa districts. Out of the above mentioned places, seven outreach centres have already grown to the level of

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid: 44

<sup>120</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

congregation, and five are at the level of outreach centres and two are preaching areas.<sup>121</sup>

### **3.2. Dodola Congregation**

Dodola congregation is around 55 years old. She is located in the predominately Muslim area to the southeast of the country, about 325 km from Addis Ababa. The history of Dodola congregation and that of the Wabe Batu Synod overlap in many ways.

The foundation stone for the establishment of Dodola congregation was laid when missionaries from Denmark came to the area in the beginning of 1950's. Marianne and Hjalmar Andersen came to Ethiopia via Djibouti. They arrived in May, 1952 and rented a house until they got a more convenient place.

The arrival of missionaries was welcomed by the then governor of the province. He decided to give a permanent plot of land so that the missionaries could settle. As Mr. Andersen was walking down in the forest, he found a place fully covered by trees and with a river in the midst. He decided to ask for this place. The governor gave him without delay and the missionaries settled there. Originally the place was called Legadobi but later changed to Lensho.<sup>122</sup>

The missionaries started teaching the local community to read and write at a place they rented. Now they continued from Lensho constructing a school building and a living house. They also preached to those who came to them to learn how to read and write, and to those who came for medical care. Dodola congregation is the outcome of this endeavour.<sup>123</sup> Though the evangelistic work in Dodola was started as early as 1952, Dodola congregation was not established officially before 1990.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Outreach centres are places where the congregation has preached the gospel and found some believers, whereas preaching areas are promising areas designated for reaching the community by the gospel.

<sup>122</sup> Informant "C" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> Ato Kefelegn Negash o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

### **3. 2. 1. Major Services of Dodola congregation**

Before the arrival of missionaries in Dodola area, the local community were traditionalists and Orthodox believers. As informant “A” explains, Muslims were few in number restricted to a place called Jafara about 10 km east of Dodola. Since 1991 Islamic faith has been expanding at alarming rate and becoming more fanatic.<sup>125</sup>

Through the challenges from traditionalists, Orthodox believers and Muslim community, Dodola congregation has been growing. The growth was not strong during the first time, today however there is a remarkable development. What helped her to grow in these challenges?

#### **3.2.1.1. Outreach Work**

Dodola congregation was started by the missionaries as an outreach centre. The missionaries were using schools and clinics as tools to reach out to the local community. In the schools (basic and Bible schools) Bible lessons were given for the school pupils. In the mean time gospel was preached to the people coming for medical treatment in their own local languages. The revival in Sidamo also passed to Dodola and Bale area by the itinerant evangelists. Ato Thomas Sodano, one of the first evangelists in Dodola, for example, came to Dodola from Kambata/Hadiya through Sidamo and Arsi. These endeavours finally give birth to Dodola congregation.<sup>126</sup>

Since then Dodola congregation has been continuing to reach out to the local community in the town as well as the vicinity. As informant “C” confirms, Dodola congregation was the case for the establishment of Worqa and Hebano parishes as well as the evangelism work in the Kokosa Woreda. The congregation was sending her members with the missionaries to evangelize the above mentioned areas.

Currently the congregation has six preaching places designated as outreach areas beyond her compound. These are: Lensho and Deneba, Adaba, Serofta, Herero, Enguange, and Terura doyo. Except Lensho and Deneba which are only about 3 km from the congregation, the rest are at

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<sup>125</sup> Informant “A” o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

more than 25 km far. Some of these, for example, Serofta are in a stronghold of Muslim community.<sup>127</sup>

### **3.2.1.2. Care and Support**

Throughout the 10- 15 years the epidemic of HIV/AIDS has left many children without their families. Because of this they have no one to care for them. At the same time victims of HIV/AIDS are increasing. All these are looking for some one to help and care for them.

Recently, Dodola congregation has started the care and support ministry both in her compound and Adaba outreach. Adaba is about 25 km east of Dodola. The care has been given for the victims of HIV/AIDS while the support has been for the victims as well as the orphaned children. Even before the HIV/AIDS there was health work as a part of the diakonia service given by the Dodola parish. Preaching the gospel went hand in hand with medical care.

The congregation has been providing support for 41 orphaned children and victims of the virus. Orphaned children are classified into two categories: those who lost both their parents (3), those who lost either of them (10- mother only 1, father only 9). There are 12 children with their victim parents who are getting support from the congregation. Victims of the virus are 16 in number and all of them are above 18 years.<sup>128</sup> The provision of care and support is not only restricted to members but it encompasses believers of all faith in the area- Orthodox, Muslim and Evangelicals.

The care includes comforting with the word of God and prayer, as well as cleaning their bodies, homes and clothes. Professionals from the congregation are assigned to care for these people.<sup>129</sup>

### **3.2.1.3. Diakonia**

Diakonia is a service of love and support given by the congregation for the poor, old-aged and disabled members. The number of recipients of

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<sup>127</sup> Informant "C" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>128</sup> Ato Kefelegn Negash o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

support through the Diakonia ministry of the congregation is not limited because the support is only a one time support. In some cases due to the seriousness of their situation, it can be extended to twice or above. The committee elected to run this program will decide whom to get the support from many of these groups. After scrutinizing, the committee sends their proposal to the elders committee to be effected.

#### **3.2.1.4. In-reach ministry**

The in-reach ministry is a ministry given to strengthen the faith of members of the congregation. It includes main programs like, Sunday services and other programs held in a week. Among the weekly programs that have contributed a lot for strengthening the faith of believers are: prayer, Sunday school, Youth, and women ministries, Bible study and home cells are the major once. In addition, the continual teachings given from Sunday school children to the ministerial teaching level are main factors for the growth of the congregation.<sup>130</sup> These teachings have strengthened the faith of the believers so that it increased their commitment to take part in all activities of the congregation by giving their times, money, skill and knowledge.

Currently Dodola congregation has 694 members in the town out of which 420 are communicants. 2 pastors and 8 evangelists have been serving in the congregation, and at the six outreach centres. The annual income of the congregation which was 9,431.67 in 1990 has now reached 56,148.82, in 2007.<sup>131</sup>

### **3.3. Tabor Congregation**

Tabor congregation is one of the youngest congregations of EECMY, found in Awassa, the capital of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), 275 km south of Addis Ababa. She was established as a congregation on October 19, 1996 with 368 members including children of which 150 were communicant members.

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<sup>130</sup> Informant "C" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

In one way or the other, Tabor congregation is one of the outcomes of the NLM work. The NLM has come to Ethiopia in 1948 and started mission work in the southern part of the country in 1949. As a result of that endeavour, Awassa congregation, which is the mother congregation for Tabor, was established in 1961.<sup>132</sup>

According to my informant, Ato Mitiku, who has been the chairperson for the elders' of the Awassa congregation for a long time says, the reason making it necessary for the opening of a second congregation in Awassa town was that before 1992 there were a few members in Awassa congregation, and she was the only Mekane Yesus congregation in town. The leaders began to pray to God that He may increase members. Their prayer was heard and answered by God. Many started coming to the congregation as the town was growing. It was at that time, specifically in 1992, that the leaders of Awassa congregation began to think about having another congregation on the other side of the town.<sup>133</sup>

One of the reasons for people flocking to churches was the dawn fall of Military regime in 1991. At the time of the Military regime, all congregations of other denominations were closed and the only congregation in Awassa where believers could go to worship God was the Awassa congregation. Following the down fall the Military regime, the EPRDF that took the leadership of the country declared the freedom of religion. Therefore, all the closed congregations were opened and began the ordinary worship programs. At the same time the town was also growing. The place where Tabor congregation now found was the new suburb area. New houses were built for living and people have started living there. Other denominations have started to plant their congregations in the vicinity. The leaders of Awassa congregation had a fear that their members could be taken by these denominations, for some of them already have started worshipping in the nearest churches. This fear had led the leaders to plan for the additional congregation.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ato Demeke Hamesso o. i: 04/10/07: Ato Mitiku Mengistu o.i: 03/10/07, Awassa

<sup>133</sup> Ato Mitiku Mengistu o. i: 03/10/07, Awassa

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

In addition, Ato Mitiku, as a chairperson of the elders' board, used to tell the elders and congregants about a vision he had received from the Lord:

*“God will multiply us and when this happens, we will open congregations in the areas like, near Tabor Mountain, Monopol, Loke, Tikur Woha, Shashemene, and more.”*<sup>135</sup>

Rev. Shiferaw Feleke who was a member of Awassa congregation and now a pastor for Tabor congregation recalls this:

*“Ato Mitiku Mengistu had a dream/vision of establishing additional Mekane Yesus congregations in Awassa town at the areas like, near Tabor Mountain, Monopol, Tikur Woha, Loke and other parts of the town. I can say Tabor congregation was the outcome of Ato Mitiku's vision.”*<sup>136</sup>

Now in Awassa town, including Tabor and Awassa congregations, there are seven Mekane Yesus congregations planted at different places.

At her establishment, Tabor congregation had no organized ministries and ministers except that of two evangelists and one guard. It was the mother congregation that provided all ministers for Tabor.

At present, including the Outreach and In-land Mission Works, Tabor has 84 paid workers and full-time ministers, and more than 300 volunteers involved in different activities and ministries. Out of the 84 workers, 38 are assigned for evangelistic ministries. Seven evangelists and two pastors are serving in Tabor congregation. The total membership of the congregation, according to 2006 statistics, was 2,698 of which 1,623 are communicants and more than 1,000 are children. At the beginning, Tabor had only 3000 Eth. Birr as an initial capital but by the end of 2006, her annual income has grown to 1.6 million Eth. Birr.<sup>137</sup>

From 2001, the congregation has developed two five-year-based strategic plans for her ministries. The first phase of the strategic plan was from 2001-2005 and the second phase is from 2007-2011. The reason why

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid

<sup>136</sup> Rev. Shiferaw Feleke o. i: 20/09/07, Awassa

<sup>137</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary summary report of Tabor congregation

the congregation developed these strategic plans was because of the fast growth of the congregation inwardly and outwardly.

In 1992/3, when it was started as an outreach, the Sunday worship service was conducted in a small canvas erected in the compound it has given by the municipality. Soon the canvas was too small to accommodate the members. Therefore a small house was erected. Again that became too small.

In 1996, when the congregation was officially established, 8m by 16m building was built. It became full in less than a year. A veranda which has the same size with the building was added. Within a year again it became too small. Finally leaders decided to build a big shelter (16m by 36m); hoping that this will solve the problem until they build a permanent building that can accommodate all her members. Their hope was not exceeding two years. Again the shelter became too small to accommodate all. All these time, what have been built were without plan only to solve the immediate problem that was occurring.

In addition, the outreach work she has started in Awassa town and surrounding as well as in Arsi Negelle was growing rapidly. The strategic plans were developed to facilitate the congregation with good leadership and to make all her ministries so effective.<sup>138</sup>

### **3.3.1. Major Services of Tabor congregation**

According to the elders and pastor of the congregation, the congregation runs outreach and in-land mission work, schools, small scale agricultural-mission work, child development program, and HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, in addition to nurturing and empowering her members. These services and activities so far have contributed a lot for fast growth of this congregation.

#### **3.3.1.1. The Outreach and In- Land Mission Work**

The outreach work is done within Awassa town and the surroundings as well as in Arsi Negelle area, which is predominantly Muslim. Within the last

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<sup>138</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o. i: 29/09/07: Ato Biratu Deressa o. I: 25/09/07, Awassa

11 years, Tabor congregation has planted seven congregations; four in and around Awassa town and three in Arsi Negelle area. About 30 outreach places are opened: 27 in Arsi Negelle area and 3 in the surroundings of Awassa. 17 evangelists are deployed for the evangelistic work in Arsi area and 3 for the work around Awassa town.<sup>139</sup>

The In-Land Mission Work is a mission work done by the congregation in the southwest of the country, in Kaffa Zone. It is about 700 km from Awassa. The work was started in January 2004 among the traditional believers in the area. Tabor congregation does this work in collaboration with Bonga Bethel Mekane Yesus congregation/BBMYC/ in the area. The BBMYC provides the evangelists while Tabor helps financially. So far, 4 stations were upgraded to congregation level, and there are 20 mission stations growing to the level of congregations in the near future. Nine evangelists are commissioned to this ministry.<sup>140</sup>

### **3.3.1.2. The School Work**

The congregation has opened in her compound one primary school /from grade 1-8/ in September 2001 and one Kindergarten/KG/ in September 2006. There is also a night school for those who cannot attend the day schools. Twenty teachers are teaching more than 1000 students in these schools.

The reason for opening these schools is to provide modern education based on Christian values and to give a chance for the school children to hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus. All of the school children are not from the congregation members. There are some from Orthodox, traditional believers and Muslim families. By joining these schools they have a privilege to hear the word of God.

An amazing story was told by the administrator of the congregation that affirms how much the Church schools have been contributing a lot for the growth of the congregations.

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<sup>139</sup> Rev. Shiferaw Feleke o.i: 20/09/07, Awassa

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

*“There was a boy from a Muslim family joined the Kindergarten in September 2006. As he was attending his class he got a chance to listen to the word of God and Christian songs. When he finished the first semester, he asked one of his teachers at the school if his name could be changed to a Christian name. His teacher asked him why he wanted to change his name. His answer was ‘I am very pleased with Christian songs and the Bible words; therefore, I would like to be called by Christian name than the Muslim.’ As far as he was in that KG to the end of the school year, he was called by a Christian name. Sad enough, for the second school year his family was not willing to send him to the same school fearing that he might change his faith.”<sup>141</sup>*

This is only mentioned as a sample, but there are a lot of incidents in which many have come to Christ because of the word of God they have heard in this school. From my observation, I came to know that the school children have their own gathering for having fellowship to worship God together once a week. Every morning, before the class begins, they have a short devotion time for about 15 minutes as they gather for the flag ceremony. All these activities give a chance for non-Christian students to hear the word of God and decide to follow Christ. This is one of the means for the growth of the congregation.

### **3.3.1.3. Agriculture- Mission Ministry**

A small scale of agriculture ministry mainly done in Arsi Negelle area and the surrounding of Awassa is another activity of the congregation. The congregation runs this ministry in collaboration with the Memorial Lutheran Congregation (MLC) in Iowa, USA. The aim is to improve the livelihood of poor farmers in the areas by providing them with tools, oxen, fertilizers and selected seeds, and using this ministry as a means to reach non-Christians with the word of God.

In the areas like Arsi, which is predominantly Muslim, it is very difficult to preach the word of God directly. Providing this kind of ministry makes it

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<sup>141</sup> Ato Biratu Deressa o. i: 25/09/07, Awassa

easy to communicate them smoothly and preach the word of God. As Dr. Kebede confirms, whenever the farmers come for getting instructions for the agricultural activities, he and evangelists from the congregation preach the word of God to them, and as a result of this, many have become Christians and outreach centres are planted.<sup>142</sup>

#### **3.3.1.4. Child Development Program**

The Child Development Project (CDP) is done in collaboration with the Compassion International Ethiopia (CIE) office. 268 children are getting sponsorship for their daily life and education through this project. About 80% of children are from non-Christian families. One of the regulations is that the children have to attend Sunday school classes provided for them, and their parents have to attend different meetings when called. Through the Sunday school classes the children hear the word of God. At every session of families' gatherings, the meeting usually begins by sharing the word of God. In this way both children and families have a chance to hear the word of God.

As Ato Biratu explains, most of the children are now regularly coming to Church programs, and about 25 families have received Jesus Christ as their personal saviour.<sup>143</sup>

#### **3.3.1.5. HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control**

Tabor has engaged in the prevention and control of the expansion of HIV/AIDS. In 2003, the congregation prepared 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee for those who had stayed faithfully since they married for 25 years and above. The couples dressed in their traditional dress and made a demonstration in the Awassa town main streets telling that they had been faithful and admonished the youngsters to follow in their foot steps. It was a great message not only for Awassa town but also for the whole country for the program was broadcast by the national television. The congregation is teaching her members how to

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<sup>142</sup> Dr. Kebede Mulatu o.i: 26/09/07, Awassa

<sup>143</sup> Ato Biratu Deressa o. i: 25/09/07, Awassa

protect themselves from the HIV pandemic for those married and unmarried, including children at the Sunday school.<sup>144</sup>

### **3.3.1.6. Empowering and Nurturing Members**

As Rev. Shiferaw explains, the congregation nurtures and empowers her members at different levels in addition to the Sunday services. Children up to fourteen years old are taught in Sunday school according to their ages. When they finish Sunday school at the age of fourteen, they are admitted to a basic Bible teaching class or follow-up for about six to nine months before they take confirmation class. In the confirmation class, they will be taught for nine months. After the graduation from the confirmation class, they are admitted to a ministerial teaching class where they will be taught for more nine months how to serve the Lord Jesus. Finally, they will start to serve in a voluntary manner according to their gifts. If new converts come to church, they will begin the teaching cycle from the basic Bible teaching class and go through the rest of cycle to become one of the volunteer ministers within the congregation.

In addition to the Sunday main service, evening programs, morning prayers- three times a week, home cells programs- for 8 to 10 families to worship and prayer together once a week, Bible studies and discipleship training are additional programs for empowering and nurturing the flock of God that help them to be strong in their faith and grow spiritually.<sup>145</sup>

## **4. Comparative Analysis of the three congregations**

Under this sub topic I am going to present two major issues regarding the three congregations. The first one is the comparison of growth in terms of number. The comparison in terms of spiritual growth will not be presented because it is too difficult to major the spiritually growth. The numerical growth can be seen from the statistics of each congregation for comparison. The second point is the difference of each congregation. That means what makes one congregation different from the rest of two.

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<sup>144</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o. i: 29/09/07, Awassa

<sup>145</sup> Rev. Shiferaw Feleke o. i: 20/09/07, Awassa

#### **4.1. Comparison of Numerical Growth**

One way to evaluate the growth of one congregation is to look into the members she has. That determines how much she has grown numerically. The statistics of each of the three congregation was pointed out earlier in this chapter when I discussed the history and activities of each of them. Each congregation is planted at different time and places. The age they have been in ministry is different. Depending on their years of ministry the number of members they have at present is also different.

##### **4.1.1. Addis Ababa Congregation**

When AAC was officially established on October 16, 1921, the time when elders board was elected for the congregation, there was no clear statistics. After three years, it was reported that there were 35 registered members. Within the last 105 years the membership has grown to 1874.

If we divide the years AAC has been in ministry with the members she has now, it can be said that the growth in membership was about 18 persons per year since the establishment of this congregation. She has planted only 14 outreach centres of which 7 have been upgraded to the congregation level thus far.

##### **4.1.2. Dodola congregation**

Dodola congregation has been in ministry for the last 56 years. She has spent most of her time as an outreach. It is only 18 years since she was upgraded to the level of local congregation. If we divide the current members she has, which 694 to the 18 years she has been a congregation, this indicates that the membership was growing nearly by 39 persons per year. But from the time of her commencement it was growing only by 12 persons. The number of outreach centres she has planted so far is only six.

##### **4.1.3. Tabor congregation**

Tabor congregation is only 11 years in ministry. At present she has 2698 members. From this it can be said that the growth rate of the congregation was about 245 persons per year. She has planted more than 30

outreach centres and 20 mission stations. All together, 11 outreach centres and mission stations have been upgraded to the level of local congregations.

From this comparison one can clearly see that among the three congregations, Tabor is a congregation growing faster than the rest of two. The reason for her fast growth is discussed earlier. Though Tabor is growing faster than the two other congregations, this does not mean that she is the only growing congregation. Even though the pace of their growth seems lower than Tabor, both of them are growing from year to year.

## **5. The Differences of Each Congregation**

Addis Ababa congregation is different from the rest of two other congregations for the following reasons.

- She has been in the ministry for more than a century.
- Most of her members, from her inception up to now, have been prominent people like, top officials, ministers, generals, high traders, highly esteemed grown-ups, and the like.
- Until some of them were deported to Eritrea due to the Ethio-Eritrean war in 1999 and 2000, most of her members were people who came from Eritrea and settled in Addis Ababa.
- She was established by the pioneering work of SEM, and due to that she has kept high liturgical value of the mission to this day.
- She has full-time ministers for ministries of Sunday school children, Youth and Women.

Dodola congregation is different from the rest of two congregations for the following reasons.

- She is found in a predominantly Muslim area. Because of this she has been under high influence from Muslim community on her ministry of outreach. Direct and indirect Persecution has been one of the influences. People are not daring to come boldly to faith for the fear of not to be expelled from the society.

- People who came to faith at the beginning were poor, weak, youth and women who cannot decide for themselves according to the culture of the society.
- She has fewer members when compared to other congregations. Due to this economically she is not well enough to run all her ministries.
- She was established by the pioneering work of DEM. The provisions of finance at the beginning of the work by the mission have developed a lot of dependence, though they are struggling to be free from the dependence.

Tabor congregation is different from the rest of two congregations for the following reasons.

- She is a young and dynamic congregation in reaching out to the unreached groups of people. She is one of the first congregations EECMY to launch the In-land mission work at her youth age.
- She was not founded by the pioneering work of any mission organization, but by the indigenous people.
- She has not copied or followed any worship style of mission organizations, except accommodating the worship style of the EECMY.
- She is the first congregation to start a five-year strategic plan. Other congregations have started to develop a five-year strategic plan after they have shared her experiences.

## **Chapter Four: Factors Promoting for the Growth of Local Congregations**

This chapter outlines and discusses the findings of factors sustaining the growth of local congregations. The factors discussed under this chapter are only the major ones taken as samples from the three congregations. There are other factors which are not included in this paper. Where it is necessary, one or two of these congregations are taken to substantiate the discussion.

As Warren says, Church growth dimension is multi-dimensional. By multi-dimensional, it means a growth of the Church to different directions. If the Church is healthy, as Warren explains, she has to grow in five directions: warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship, broader through ministry, and larger through evangelism.<sup>146</sup>

One of the signs of the healthy Church is her growth from her inception to the end of the age until the Lord Jesus returns. God has already provided all necessary spiritual gifts that help the Church to grow (Eph. 4: 11 and 1 Cor. 12: 4- 11). It is the responsibility of the Church to make use of these spiritual gifts to enhance her growth in all directions she has to grow spiritually, physically and numerically.

The growth of the Church towards maturity comes from her expansion inwardly and outwardly. The inward expansion is the expansion to strengthen the faith of her members by teaching consecutively. The outward expansion is the expansion to reach out to the un-reached areas.

In the book of Acts and in the history of the Church, we see that growth is essential to the nature of the Church. The unity and clean heart believers had for one another (Acts 2: 43- 47; 4: 32), the power of the Holy Spirit working among them (Acts 3, 4, 5) were some of the factors of the Early Church's healthy growth. Therefore, growing Church manifests her healthiness.

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<sup>146</sup> Warren, Rick 1995: 48

When the Church is faithful to God and His commandments, she will grow. The faithfulness of the Church is revealed when she is committed to *“press on telling men the good news of the Saviour and in finding the lost.”*<sup>147</sup>

One of the critical questions often raised by many is, where should the Church grow? According to Hedlund, the Church needs to grow in six major areas:<sup>148</sup>

1. **In depth:** this is a growth towards selfhood, for example, to be indiginised, contextualised to the country/culture in which she is planted and operating. The gospel, God's universal message- the message to all nations of the earth, is incarnational in its very nature. It has to be preached and taught cross-culturally and through inculturation. Therefore, a Church in Ethiopia cannot be as a Church in Europe and Asia.

2. **In breadth:** this is a growth in geographic expansion. The Church is not restricted to one place. She is called to reach to the end of the earth (Acts 1: 8, Matthew 28: 18-20). Therefore, as she fullfills the Great Commision, or strives to take the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to the un-reached nations and nationalits, she grows.

As it is known from the history of the Church and the Bible, the birth of the Church was in Jersusalem at the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1ff). A small group of people in Jerusalem commisioned with the Great Commision proclaimed the good news to the end of the world. It was their endeavor that caused churhces to be planted accros the earth.

3. **Internally:** this growth is a growth of each and every person in the Church when they grow spiritually. It is a growth one has to grow to be more like Jesus or to be the true disciple of Him.

Spiritual growth never comes overnight but it mainly depends on the individual relation with the Lord Jesus. As one devotes his/her time to be with Jesus in prayer, Bible reading and study, he/she will grow spiritually.

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<sup>147</sup> McGavran, Donald A 1970: 15

<sup>148</sup> Hedlund, Roger E 1977: xvi

4. **Externally:** this is a growth to reach out to others by evangelizing the society in which the Church is operating.

The Church is commissioned to evangelize the nations because:

- It is God's commandment: Matthew 28: 18-20; Acts 1: 8
- There is no other way to come to God than by Jesus: John 14: 6; Acts 4: 12
- Hell or perdition is reality and God does not want anyone to persih but escape from it through Jesus: Matt. 7: 13f; 2 Thess. 1: 8-9
- People's deepest need is to be reconciled to God: 2 Cor. 5: 18-20; Col. 1: 21f
- We cannot keep silent about what we have experienced: 2 Cor. 5: 14-15
- God rejoices and is honoured when someone is saved: Lk. 15: 7, 10, 21ff

5. **Vertically:** this is a growth towards the Lord, to have a right relationship with Him. Vertical growth only comes through prayer and Bible study. The Lord is always ready to have relationship with his people. The only obstacle that hinders the Lord in communicating with His people is sin between Him and His people. Therefore, the barrier has to be cleaned by repentance, for the Lord is faithful to give forgiveness to the one who confesses his/her sin (1 John 1: 9).

6. **Horizontally:** this is a growth towards the neighbours whether they are Christians or non-Christians in order to have good neighbourly relationship with them. This kind of fellowship or relationship, will provide a chance for Christians to witness about their faith to non-Christians.

To use the classical Church growth terminology, as Hedlund explains, the Church growth can be seen also because of biological, transfer and conversion.<sup>149</sup>

Biological growth is a growth that comes due to the addition of the children of Christian families. Whereas transfer growth is a growth that comes

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid: xviii

because of a change of local Church affiliation. Conversion growth is the growth that takes place when non-Christians come to faith and join the Church or convert to Christianity.<sup>150</sup>

Now let us turn to see the factors promoting the growth of local congregations one by one.

#### **4.1. The Mighty Hand of God and the Power of the Holy Spirit**

God is the originator of all creation as well as the Church. The Church was born not because of the will of humans but because of the will of God. She is the fruit of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Before He ascended to Heaven, Jesus told his disciples to wait for the promise (Holy Spirit) God had given them until it would be fulfilled, by remaining in Jerusalem (Lk. 24: 49). On the day of Pentecost, He sent the promise of God while they were waiting in prayer (Acts 2: 1- 4).

When the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, all of them were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and began to preach boldly the gospel of our Lord to the multitude gathered in Jerusalem for celebration of the Pentecost. This endeavour had brought three thousand people to repentance and baptism, which marked the birth of the Church (Acts 2: 1ff).

The first Church continued growing because of the mighty hand of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is good to read the chapters of the book of Acts to know more about the mighty hand of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in the growth of Early Church. The following chapters are few examples (Acts 2: 37- 47; 4: 1- 4; 5: 1-14).

As Hedlund confirms,

*“The Church growth is related to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Church growth is the mighty movement of the Holy Spirit. It is God in Jesus Christ exploding into human life and enabling man to explode Jesus Christ into the world.”*<sup>151</sup>

If it were not the mighty hand of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, the few members in the congregations like Addis Ababa and Dodola at the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid: xix

<sup>151</sup> Ibid: ix

beginning, would not have been existed and grown in the midst of persecution from the Orthodox believers and Muslim community. For example, for Addis Ababa congregation God has provided persons like Emmanuel Abraham, who was a minister at the time of Imperial regime but was defending the church. He was an instrument for God's hand to be seen in the congregation. In the same way also God has given to the congregation prominent and well-educated individuals who have been accepted and honoured at various places like, business, governmental offices and so on. Because of them, people were/are coming to the congregation.

The revival and spiritual movements came to Addis Ababa congregation at the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s have resulted the manifestations of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. There was healing ministry in the congregation at that time. The mighty hand of God was moving in the midst of every meeting. Many people were healed from their illness and have given their lives to Christ, which resulted in the growth of the congregation.<sup>152</sup>

In the case of Tabor congregation, at the beginning of the congregation, in 1996, elders have decided to seek the face and the voice of God. For that purpose they took three consecutive days for prayer. At the end of the third day, God spoke to them confirming that they will be a tool for what He has planned to accomplish in this congregation: *"You will be a symbol and witness for me for what I will do in this congregation."*

Believing the voice of God, they began their ministry. At the beginning they had only 3000 ETB in their hands, but planned for 85,000.00 birr for a year. At the end of the year, they got 125,000.00 birr, which happened, as they believe, because of the miraculous hand of God.<sup>153</sup>

#### **4.2. The Word of God**

The Bible tells us that the word of God:

- Is a creative word: (Heb. 11: 3)
- Is a living, sharp and powerful word: (Heb. 4: 12- 13)
- Is given for inspiration and purpose: (2Tim. 3: 14- 17)

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<sup>152</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

<sup>153</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o. i: 29/09/07, Awassa

- Is truth: (John 17: 17- 19; 119: 142, 160)
- Does what it says: (James 1: 22 – 25)
- Gives joy to the heart: (Ps. 19: 7- 11)
- Is not invented stories, but an eyewitness account of the Lord's Majesty: (2 Pet. 1: 16- 21; Ps. 119: 140)
- Is pure like silver seven times purified in a furnace: (Ps. 12: 6)
- Is proven: (Ps. 18: 30)
- Is right: (Ps. 33: 4)

To understand and get the treasure in the word of God as it has been outlined above, one has to give his/her time to study the word of God. This is actually what I have seen in the three congregations I have selected. In all the three congregations, as my informants agree, they have strong Bible study groups. For example, in one of the congregations, there are about 20 Bible study groups. In each group there are about 8-10 people. They meet once a week to study the Bible. Materials for the study are prepared by the congregation Bible study committee. The committee has the responsibility of running the program in addition to producing materials for study.

Bible study is not only reading and going through the whole Bible but is about taking a paragraph, a book, or topics from the Bible for the purpose of meditating and contemplating on it, and by doing this finally to gain more understanding of the knowledge of Christ, to be strong in Christian faith and to grow spiritually towards the fullness of God (Eph. 3: 19).

Every time when Bible study groups meet once a week, they have at least one topic for study. There are several topics prepared by the Bible study committee. Some of these are: about holiness, love, patience, discipleship, and the like. Bible verses that go with the given topic are selected from the Bible and the study goes in that way until the group finishes the given topic, then they will proceed to the next. The group members discuss the verses for an hour until all understood about the topic. At the end of the study, they will take time for prayer and meditation. If one feels he has some thing to confess, he will stand up in the midst of the group and confesses his sin to God and the group will pray for him.

This kind of Bible study is a tool for the growth of local congregations. It does not only make the congregations to grow but helps Christians to withstand challenges they often face in their daily lives and at the time of trials and persecutions. The Early Church was a witness to this reality. She passed through severe persecutions for many decades but survived because of Bible studies she had in every Christian homes (Acts 2: 42).

### **4.3. An Open Heart for the Word of God**

The epistle to Hebrews tells us the necessity of opening the heart with faith when we listen to the word of God. Otherwise there is a danger of missing the benefit of the treasure of the word of God. *“... but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith”* (Heb. 4: 2b). The word works in the life of the listeners when they listen to it with an open and humble heart, and receive it in faith for God never despises a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51: 17b).

As the Church opens her heart for the word of God, her spiritual and numerical growth will be seen. The almighty hand of God works among those who open their hearts for the word of God, for He is always ready to perform His word (Jer. 1: 12).

One of my informants has some thing to say on how they know whether their members open their hearts for the word of God or not. He says, *“This can be seen easily from their obedience to their leaders and the word of God. If they respond immediately to questions raised by their leaders, for example, about to give their tithe, time, knowledge and skill for the congregation work, this is an indication of devoting oneself to the word of God and their leaders. We are blessed because the number of those giving their tithe is increasing year by year”*<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o. i: 29/09/07, Awassa

#### **4.4. Consecutive, Solid and Sound Biblical Teaching and Training for Nurturing Members**

In Matthew 28: 18-20 when Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, His focus was to teach the believers in order for them to observe all things that he had commanded them. Great Commission has three main responsibilities. These are:

- To go out to the whole nations and preach the good news.
- To baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- To teach them so that they can keep all that Jesus has commanded them.

Many congregations accomplish the first two responsibilities and forget the third. They may say we did teaching as well. But teaching is not only to give short courses to let the believers to get baptism and be a member of the congregation. Of course, this should be part of teaching but it must go beyond that. Congregations have to teach their members for the purpose of edification until they experience changes in their behaviour that bring them to a level of maturity and to be disciples of Jesus, which is the level of spiritual growth.

A new believer is like a new born baby who needs care and instruction. He/she cannot grow by him/herself unless someone takes care of him/her and guides. The same is true for spiritual growth. This is why congregations need to guide, care and give instructions for new believers until they reach the level of maturity.

In reality there is no stopping point for teaching, training and instruction in the congregations. Members are in the process of teaching and learning throughout their lives to lead them to spiritual growth.

All the three congregations are highly committed to put into practice all aspects of Christian ministry- giving continual, solid, and sound biblical teachings. For this purpose, they have devised, to use the term often mentioned by Rev. Shiferaw, "*a four-fold teaching cycle*"<sup>155</sup> to teach and train

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<sup>155</sup> Four-fold teaching cycle is a cycle that congregation members pass through to grow spiritually. The cycle begins with Sunday school Children's Ministry and goes on to Fellow up or basic Bible teaching class, Confirmation class and Ministerial class.

their members, which has contributed a lot to their growth spiritually and numerically.<sup>156</sup>

The “*four-fold teaching cycle*” is a cycle that helps members to get solid and consecutive teachings. The cycle often begins from the Sunday school children ministry. Children are divided according to their ages and taught lessons prepared for each age group until the age of fourteen. More of the lessons of this class is biblical stories and to let the children to be familiar with the Bible and the Bible men. At the end, they will be graduated and join the next teaching cycle, which is a basic Bible teaching class or the follow-up class. The focus of the follow-up class is to let the students to know more about Christ, Christian faith and basic knowledge of the Bible. This helps them to be sure in whom and why they believe, and to let them stand firm in their faiths. Grown up people come to Christ will begin the cycle at this level and will go through the rest.

The next cycle to a follow-up class is a confirmation class. Here the students will stay for six to nine months to finish lessons prepared for this class. Major topics covered at this level are: Doctrine of the Church, unity and diversity between different denominations, Holy Sacraments- Holy Communion and Baptism, Creeds, Stewardship. Diakonia, Christian Marriage, Discipleship and Bible study.

The last class for this cycle is what they call the ministerial teaching class. It is only designed for those who finish the confirmation class. The class is given for more six to nine months. The main focus of this class is, about how to serve God within the congregation throughout the rest of their lives. Some major topics taught at this level are: the meaning of ministry, the owner of ministry, the purpose and goal of ministry, whom to serve, how to handle devotional life, how to identify one's gift, Holy Spirit- his gifts and how to use them. When the students finish their lessons, they will be graduated and begin to serve in the congregation according to their gifts.

At the end of every class, the students are given examination of what they have been taught to evaluate how much they have understood. In addition, teachers and students will take also time together to discuss about

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<sup>156</sup> Rev. Shiferaw Feleke o. i: 20/09/07, Awassa

each lesson to enlarge their understanding. Finally, evangelists, pastors and elders will pray for them and dedicate them to ministries within the congregation.

In addition to the “*four-fold teaching cycle*”, every congregation has different kind of training on several topics every year. As my informants confirm, topics like marriage, holiness, soul winning and evangelisation, discipleship, etc are the major topics covered by the congregations once a year.

Committees in the congregations- Youth, Women, Sunday school Children’s ministry, and Bible study, and so on, have their own yearly plan to train their committee members as well as the members in their congregations. This is done under the auspices of the Evangelism Department or the Spiritual Maturity Committee, as it has been called according to the respective congregations.

As members take part in these teaching and training, they will get a chance to put their faith into practice, which help them to grow spiritually, and at the same time their participation in the ministries of their congregations will help the congregations to grow spiritually and numerically.

#### **4.5. Worship**

Worship is uninterrupted process of communing with God, for this is the purpose why human beings are created by God. Worship is not the only part people do when they come to Church. All that is done in the Church like prayer, Lord’s Supper, biblical instructions and preaching, singing, baptism, offerings and gifts, etc. are part of worship. Human beings are demanded to worship and love God throughout their lives with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their minds, and with all their strength (Duet. 6: 4-5; Mk. 12: 30).

The reason why God freed His people from the bondage of Egypt was to lead His people to worship Him (Ex. 8: 1). Therefore, worship is vital for the Church and in a Christians’ life.

There is an Oromo proverb which I would like to quote here: “*A family that has something to eat and worship God will not be vanished.*” If one has something to eat he will never die of starvation, but survive. The same is true about the one whom worships God because God gives him power and

strength to overcome all challenges of life and keeps him growing in all aspects of life.

There is a promise in the word of God for those whom worship Him. *“Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span....”* (Ex. 23: 25ff, NIV).

A pure and clean heart is essential to worship God. Once people come to God with pure and clean hearts, He gives them His power, strength and grace which help them to grow spiritually towards His likeness. Therefore, worshipping God is one of the factors promoting growth of local congregations.

All the three congregations give due attention to worshipping God. Members are keen to worship God. With some exceptions, unless they have difficulties which hinder them to come to Church, they do not remain behind. When they come they get revived or renewed by one another as they worship the Lord and fellowship together.

The leaders of each congregation I have visited have underlined that due to the love their members have towards the Lord, they are flocking to the congregations in multitudes. In one of the congregations, I have observed more than three thousand people gathered for a single Sunday worship service. The Church could not accommodate them and half of the people were sitting outside under the shelters and trees. They could not see the activities in the Church building for they were outside. The only opportunity they had was to listen to the voices through the microphones.

Actually, this is a challenge especially at the time of rain and sun to be outside the Church building and only listen to the voice through the microphones. But what makes these people keep coming to Church in such a situation, as my informants confirm, is the love they have to worship God. This is an indication of the growth in spiritual life.

The life changing songs sing by group of singers also attract many young people to the church, for they are very enthusiastic about worship. It is not only the church youth that are coming for worship, non-believers also coming to church due to music instruments and living songs in the church. The youth in the church sometimes arrange music concert to worship God

where they invite their non-believer friends. As they come to church, they will get a chance to hear to the word of God. Since the word of God is a living, sharp and powerful word (Heb. 4: 12), it works in their life and in due time, they will decide to follow Jesus.

#### **4.6. Prayer and Ability to Listen to God to Receive Vision and Directions**

I have seen a lot of times at homes I have visited a quotation on prayer which says, *“Prayer changes things.”* According to this phrase there is power in prayer which has an ability to change things.

If prayer was not necessary for Christians as well as for the growth of the Church and it has no power to change things, Jesus would not have taught it to his disciples and would not have prayed himself. But because it is useful and powerful, he taught his disciples and he himself did so (Math. 6: 5-13; 14:23).

Prayer is an easy instrument that can be used by anyone in the kingdom of God. It is designed to be mighty and powerful in the sight of God even if it is used by one who feels he/she is too weak (2 Cor. 10: 3-6).

Even if prayer has such mighty power, it alone does not bring change, but it is the ability to listen to the Lord and do what he says that brings change. Jesus often listens to His father as he was praying. Therefore, he did what God intended to do through him for humanity.

A man of prayer often receives vision from God and sees what God is intending to do. As we pray to God vision comes to us. This is why Munroe says

*“Vision is the primary motivator of human action, and, therefore, everything we do should be because of the vision God has placed in our hearts. Vision influences the way you conduct your entire life, such as what you spend your time and money on and what your priorities are. Without vision, you have no values to guide your living. Life has no sense of direction. Activity has no meaning. Time has no purpose. Resources have no application.”<sup>157</sup>*

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<sup>157</sup> Munroe, Myles 2006: 32

Maxwell also adds on the power in vision: *“The vision has power because it provides leaders with, Awareness, Attitude, and Action achievement.”*<sup>158</sup>

The congregations I have selected have a lot of experience in prayer. They have morning prayer times- from 6am to 7.30am, evening prayer times- from 6pm to 8pm (times are different from congregation to congregation, for some, it is from 6pm to 7pm) within weekdays. They have special prayer time, for example, the week of Ethiopian special month, Pagumen, which has only 5 or 6 days on leap-year. The week of Pagumen is a special week, because it is a week that precedes the Ethiopian New Year in which all churches in Ethiopia used to pray to prepare for the New Year to receive it with fresh mind, soul and spirit.

They have also the whole month with special purposes. For example, in her yearly plan, Tabor congregation designated the month of May to pray for the country, the sick, and for people with many challenges of life. Members are encouraged to bring their prayer requests written down and enveloped. The congregation prays for them until the end of the month and returns the envelopes at the end. As Rev. Shiferaw and others I have interviewed from this congregation confirm, they often receive encouraging feedbacks from their members which confirm that their prayer requests are answered by God.

Every congregation has a special prayer bands or groups which pray for the ministry of the congregation. All of the three congregations almost have five to six such bands or groups. These bands have their own prayer days and time. They pray for members to grow spiritually and the congregation to expand and the gospel to be preached to the un-reached groups of people.

They have also a mountain prayer. Mountain prayers are done occasionally when they have special case to pray for. According to my informants, some of the cases are, when they feel that the power of the evil spirit is working in the town they are ministering- this could be the increase of sudden death, for example, by car accident or malaria pandemic, then they

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<sup>158</sup> Maxwell, John C 2001: 226

decide a day to be on the mountain to pray about it so that God may break the power of the evil spirit. In all these prayers they have seen the power of God.

One of my informants has shared the following story about the power in prayer:

*“We had special experiences due to some of our night prayer programs we had some time ago. All those prayer programs we got new believers and people were set free from the bondage of Satan. The program was meant mainly for Church members but because of the power of the Lord was working, members started inviting their friends, and those who came and saw what God was doing continued inviting others. It was because of this that we got new believers and people became free from the bondage of Satan.”<sup>159</sup>*

#### **4.7. Commitment of Leaders, Ministers and Members**

Anywhere and any time commitment is a challenge for human being. Specifically, committing oneself to prayer is a challenge for human being. The reason is that, as my informants explain, the Devil does not want Christians to pray to God, for he knows that when they pray, they destroy his work. Therefore, he makes them busy with different things so that they cannot find time to pray. He also makes them exhausted physically that they cannot come to prayer programs or prays by themselves. But in the midst of these challenges when they commit themselves for prayer, they exercise they power of God in their lives.

To see the growth of a Church in every aspect of her ministries as well as all dimensions, commitment of her leaders, ministers and members is decisive. This commitment could be a commitment to the evangelistic ministry, to the service, and to the prayers. Such kind of commitment can be seen easily from how the leaders, ministers and members have given their time, their money, their talents, etc. for the Church activities and ministries.

One of the reasons why the congregations of EECMY are growing so fast, as my informants agree, is due to the commitment of leaders, ministers and members. They are committed to the evangelistic ministry even at the risk

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<sup>159</sup> Informant “C” o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

of their lives and scarce resources. In some cases some of their members do not have enough for their own living, but when the congregation asks them to contribute for the evangelistic work, especially, for the outreach work; they give priority for the work of God than themselves. They are also committed to prayer and service in all their capacity.

Commitment of leaders is more decisive than the ministers and members because the leaders are always seen as models and their commitment highly influences others. Leaders have a capacity to influence others. They do this, as Munroe puts, *“through inspiration motivated by a passion, generated by a vision, produced by a conviction, ignited by a purpose.”*<sup>160</sup> If they lose this, they cannot influence others. Their positive impact and influence on ministers and members together bring growth in the Church.

#### **4.8. Being a Missionary Congregation**

According to Zachariah, a missionary congregation is *“the Church of Christ in a given place called to be God’s co-workers in His acts for mankind in all their material and spiritual, economic and political, social and religious dimensions in history.”*<sup>161</sup>

Some times people may think that a building itself is a Church. What makes the Church a Church is not a building, but it is the people inside the church that make that specific Church a Church. If people are not in the building, the building by itself cannot be a Church. It can be used for other purposes. As far as the people of God gather inside it, it is called a church.

The people of God are people with a special task and purpose (1 Pet. 2: 9-10). The task of the people of God or a Church is mainly the *“redemption, salvation, liberation, peace, humanization, evangelism of kingdom of God.”*<sup>162</sup>

This work can be accomplished when the Church takes upon herself the burden of going out to reveal the only true and living God (John 1: 14, 18; 14; 6-11) and destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3: 8) as Jesus did. That would be one of the signs of the mature congregation. A mature congregation

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<sup>160</sup> Munroe, Myles 2006: 54

<sup>161</sup> Zachariah, Mathai 1982: 83

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

is a missionary congregation in every sense of the word- a serving, growing and reproducing congregation. (Eph. 4: 1-16; 2Tim. 2: 1-2; LK. 2: 52; Col. 1: 28; EZK. 33: 1-9; John 15: 1-8; 1Thess. 1: 1-10, 14).

Congregations of EECMY are doing this. This can be seen from their commitment to the outreach work they are doing in their areas and beyond. For example, the Addis Ababa congregation has been preaching the word of God to fourteen outreach areas while Dodola and Tabor are working in six and more than thirty respectively.

As they are taking this responsibility upon themselves they are growing inwardly and outwardly. Inwardly, because they prepare themselves for the ministry in prayer that helps them to come close to the Lord. Outwardly, because they are extending themselves to others, winning souls for Christ and planting churches where it has not been planted.

Mainly two methods have been applied for planting churches: sending missionaries and Church members/individual effort. Missionaries are sent either by the sending congregation directly, or she facilitates finance while other congregation provides the missionaries. When she sends, she fully covers all related expenses. A minister can be from her members or from the outreach areas. In the case of facilitating, for example, Tabor congregation facilitates finance for the mission work in Kaffa Zone while the Bonga Bethel congregation sends the local missionaries from her members. Addis Ababa congregation also facilitates finance for the work in Bale area while WBS sends evangelists and missionaries from the local congregations within the Synod.

Reaching out to non-believers is the major task of the local congregations. The way they are reaching out to them, according to my informants are: their evangelists have their own weekly program to go out to witness about Jesus. They have a soul winning or witnessing teams that organize themselves to go out to witness once a week. Members of these teams go two by two or individually. Sometimes the witnessing teams organize themselves with the Great Commission Ministry ministers to show Jesus' film at different selected areas of the town and the outreach areas.

In some national holidays, the congregation encourages her members to go out to witness about Jesus. At every session of preaching of the word of

God in all worship programs, the preacher or program leader gives a chance for new believers to come to Jesus and receive him as their personal savior. Mostly, there are people coming forward to dedicate their lives for Christ. Rev. Shiferaw confirms, in his congregation- Tabor, there are about 5 to 10 new believers at every Sunday worship services.

Dodola congregation has special experience in this regard. According to informant "C", the congregation sends group of singers and evangelists to the outreach areas for three to twenty one days. The group is provided with finance they need and stay in the areas witnessing Christ to whom they encounter at several cases- at homes, farming places, on road, etc. For example, Serofta outreach was started in this way.

All these three congregations do the work of evangelisation or reaching out to the un-reached areas. According to their leaderes, they do this because of the following reasons. First, this is the main task of the Church, and they are here to fulfill it. Second, if they do not preach the gospel and snatch these people from the hand of Satan, their end will be hell. God does not want any one to go to it. Third, they know that the only way to the kingdom of God is by Jesus and else are not. Fourth, these areas are not reached by the gospel of Jesus and they are under the influence of Islam and traditional beliefs.

#### **4.9. Mass Evangelization or Conferences**

From the very beginning of the birth of the Churh and throughout her history, we know that mass evangelisation has been used by churches. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood up infront of a multitude and proclaimed the good news of our Lord to the crowd assembled due to the vioce they heard. Three thousand people responded to his message and were added to the Church by baptism (Acts 2: 1ff). This was the outcome of mass evangelisation. Since then churches are using mass evangelisation or conferences as one of their starategies to reach out to many people at a time.

Mass evangelisation opens the opportunity for many people to listen to the word of God. All the three congregations I have selected are using this method (conferences) once a year. I had the privilege to attend one of these conferences in one of the congregations while conducting my fieldwork.

Multitudes of people attended the conference and had a chance to listen to the word of God. Many were healed from their illnesses and sicknesses. At the end of the three days' conference, there were more than 50 new believers added to that congregation. You can imagine how mass evangelisation or conferences are a useful tool to reach out to many at once and win them for Christ. Within three days that congregation grew with 50 people.

In addition to the annual conference, groups in the congregations, for example, youth and women, through their committees, arrange yearly conference that targets their groups and any interested body. Each group invites their friends to this conference to give them a chance to listen to the word of God. Their hope is that, at least, some will decide to follow Jesus.

#### **4.10. Revival**

First and foremost, revival is not man's invention but God's gift. McGavran makes clearer: *"Revival is God's gift. Man can neither command it nor make God grant it. God Sovereignty gives revival when and where He wills it."*<sup>163</sup>

Even though it is the gift of God, there is a responsibility for humans since God responds to sincere and continued prayer. Therefore, as a human being the Church has to mobilize her members to sincere and continued prayer until God gives His free gifts of revival, which as McGavran goes on saying *"Breaks out", "Strikes", "Quickens a Church", "Comes with the suddenness of a summer storm", "Makes its appearance", "inaugurates a work of grace", and "blesses His people."*<sup>164</sup>

Based on these realities one can mention the following benefits of having revival within the Church:

- A great gathering of people can be drawn to the Church which gives the opportunity for the Church to have a kin-contact with a non-Christian population, provided that the spiritual power is channelled into witness with the purpose of winning for Christ.

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<sup>163</sup> McGavran, Donald A 1970: 166

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

- It can bring growth when a stream of converts is flowing into the Church.
- It leads people to holy living.
- Gives tremendous power... and inspires men to proclaim the gospel.
- Fills people with great joy and exaltation when the Holy Spirit is poured out.
- People begin to dedicate themselves to be Christ's people and do His will.
- People will confess their sins, make restitution, break evil habits, lead victorious lives, persuade others of the available power, bring multitudes to Christ and cause the Church to grow mightily.<sup>165</sup>

Each of the three congregations has time they refer back to, when they have experienced the revival moving in their congregations. For Addis Ababa and Dodola congregations, the end of 1980s and the beginning of '90s were the time they have experienced the spiritual awakening and revival in their congregations, which brought many to Christ. For Tabor it was the end of '90s. The revival swept through these congregations, as their leaders confirm, had always moved them to reach out to the un-reached groups of people. The outreach centres opened by these congregations were the outcome of the revival they have experienced.

At the time of revival people are eager for prayer, for Bible study, for witnessing Jesus to others, and for confessing their transgressions and sins. They strive to live godly life worthy to their calling. This leads them to grow spiritually. As they grow spiritually, they have power to attract their friends to Christ which help the church to grow.

It was the revival they have experienced that laid the foundation for the prayer and Bible study ministries in these congregations, as their leaders confirm.

#### **4.11. Miracles and Wonders**

The Word of God from its very beginning tells us that God is the maker of miracles and wonders. The heavens and the earth as well as those in the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid: 170

heavens and on earth including human beings are created by the miraculous words and hand of God (Gen. 1: 1ff). He has been doing miracles and wonders to the present age. He never stops doing miracles and wonders, and He will continue to do it to the end of the ages.

God does miracles and wonders for many reasons. Some of them are:

- To show the love and mercy He has for His creatures, especially for humanity. The coming of Jesus Christ to this earth was due to God's love for humanity. Jesus came to this world to be a Saviour, to restore the relationship between humanity and God which was broken because of sin, and to reconcile humanity with the creator God (John 3: 16). The way Jesus himself came to this world was a miracle by itself. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born from Virgin Mary, which if not by miracle could not have happened.
- To help His people in their challenges and difficulties
- To make grow and expand His Church on this earth.

The Early Church grew because of the miracles and wonders God performed by His Holy Spirit through the disciples and apostles. The book of Acts is a witness to this reality. The same is also true with the present churches. God is alive and He is on His throne. He performs miracles and wonders today also, which make the Church grow.

The congregations in Bale, for example, which are in the highly Muslim dominated areas, could not have survived and grown if God had not done miracles and wonders among them, a miracle like mentioned under point "4.5."<sup>166</sup>

Miracles and wonders are extraordinary works done by God to reveal His supernatural power. This has been a tool for the growth of the Church throughout her history.

One example, what I have observed can be mentioned here. The conference was held in one of the congregations, which I attended in November while I was doing my field work. A miracle took place. A preacher, who was invited from Addis Ababa the capital of the country, was sharing the word of God with the assembly. On the second day of the conference, at the

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<sup>166</sup> Informant "C" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

end of his preaching, he invited the people to pray to God. As we were praying he began to speak what God has shown and told him to do. He said, *“There is a lady in this conference came with a letter written to God about her problems. God has a message for you. Would you show up yourself for the public?”* he asked. One lady showed herself but she was not the real one because she was not with a letter even though she has similar problems. He repeated the message. Then with fear and trembling a lady came forward to the pulpit. He asked for the letter she has written to God. She gave it to him. He read it for the assembly. He told the assembly what God has told him to do. God has spoken to him to give what he has in his pocket just in front of the assembly and tell this so that they would do the same according to what God speaks to their heart right there. He gave out 100 ETB. All the assembly were running to the pulpit to give out what God has spoken to their heart. Right after the meeting, it was reported that more than 10,000 ETB, several clothes and a lot of gold were collected in response to the miracle God has done in the midst of the assembly. The preacher knew not the lady and neither the lady him. But God knows her and her problems.

She gave a testimony to the assembly why she wrote a letter and brought to the conference. Her answer was,

*“I have been living with many problems and challenges of life for many years. I have not had enough to eat and wear. Even I was not able to rent a better room to live in. I have prayed to God for several times, but my problems continued with me. When the congregation announced that there will be a conference at the beginning of November, as the days were approaching, especially three days earlier I began to fast and pray that God would remove my burdens from me. Believing God, at the third day of the fast and prayer I wrote this letter to Him and brought to the conference. By doing this I had a conviction that God will solve my problems and when it happens this would be a testimony for others.”*

Fortunately, I knew this lady and the problem she had because she had been helped several times by the congregation. It was because of this miracle that at the end of the conference, about 50 people were added to this congregation.

#### **4.12. Transparency, Love and Unity**

In the Early Church, there were transparency, love and unity among the believers. The Bible confirms this by saying, *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common”* (Acts 4: 32).

There is no transparency, unity and love surpassing what was seen in the Early Church, as the Bible confirms. When there is one heart and one soul, there will be transparency, love and unity. It was because of this transparency, love and unity that the Early Church believers brought together all they had and no one was claiming to say that this was his own property. This mentality helped the Early Church grow rapidly in the midst of many challenges and difficulties, especially the persecution.

It was also true for EECMY congregations at their beginning. For example, from a short history of AAC what can be observed is that they have love and unity, which is the exact implementation of what is seen in the Early Church. The members in the congregation have showed their love and unity they have in Christ for those who were in trouble and persecutions by being a shelter for them. That transparency helped them to overcome the persecution and challenges at the beginning, and finally helped them to grow.

In the predominantly Muslim area, the intimacy, love and unity among believers are decisive. Even to this day there are a lot of persecution on Christians. If some one comes to Christianity from a Muslim family, he/she will be expelled from his/her family immediately. As my informants from Dodola area confirm, Christians take the persecuted one to their homes and provide with necessary things for living. This includes clothes, food, and if that person has no option to be accepted to his/her family back after the negotiation through close relatives and clan members, the congregation will care for him/her until he/she finds job. So far, in the midst of these challenges what have been helping the persecuted one to remain in the Christian faith is the intimacy, love and unity he/she sees among Christians, which has been one of the factors for the growth of local congregations.

#### 4.13. Strong Lay Leadership

Munroe says, *“The number one need all over the globe today is not money, social program, or even new governments. It is quality, moral, disciplined principle-centred leadership.”*<sup>167</sup>

Money, social programs and new type of government are very essential for the growth of local congregations but compared to leadership they are less important. Because if there is no good and strong leadership, money cannot do anything by itself and the same is true with social programs as well as new type of government.

Leaders inspire every follower to become a leader and fulfil his potential. Today’s Church desperately needs qualified and committed leaders. If the Church gets the right leaders, it will be on the right track for growth because the leaders play a role of influencing people by inspiring them to be motivated to do what is expected from them. Therefore, the following qualities are expected from leaders: vision, transparency, purpose, goal, humility, and reverence to God and fellow men and women, mission-oriented, flexibility-ability to adjust to the new situation, passion, initiation, team work, innovation, accountability, and honesty.

*“Everything rises and falls on leadership. Leadership determines the success of the organisation and no organisation rises above its leadership.”*<sup>168</sup>

The Church needs strong leadership if she wants to climb higher and higher. Leaders are wanted not only for the Church but as Munroe explains, the world itself is in need of leaders.

*“It is obvious that our nations are painfully in need of leaders. The Church is desperately in need of leaders. Our homes are crying out for leadership. Our youth are begging for leaders.”*<sup>169</sup>

The good leaders the three congregations have had so far have helped them to grow spiritually and numerically. They plan what is best for their congregations to grow. Some of the plans, for example, are preparation of five

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<sup>167</sup> Munroe, Myles 2006: 18

<sup>168</sup> Maxwell, John C 2001: 125

<sup>169</sup> Munroe, Myles 2006: 11

years strategic plan, yearly plan and monthly plan. They devote their time, knowledge and talents to implement these plans so that the congregations grow accordingly.

#### **4.14. Practical and Exemplary Life**

As the Bible says, *“Believers of Jesus are not of the world”* (John 17:16), but they live in the world. Even though they live in the world they do not act as the secular people do because as Paul says in his epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6: 12), *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”*

Leaders of the congregations I have chosen underline the necessity of practical and exemplary life needed from the believers, which is basic for the growth of the Church. At least, they said, there should be a difference between a Christian and non-Christian in the way he/she lives and that living has to reveal Christ.

As a human being, no one is perfect and free from criticism or blame. But Christians are called to live the life that is free from criticism or blame as they prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord Jesus (1Thess. 5: 23). It is the practical and exemplary life worthy to the word of God and the calling that makes the difference between believers and non-believers. That difference has a power to draw others to the same life, or to Christianity, which makes the Church grow.

I have found people striving to live the practical and exemplary life in the congregations I have selected. Not all are striving equally, but the majority are. They do this by devoting themselves to the study of the word of God, prayer and applying the word to their daily lives in order not to be defiled by the impurities of this world.

No one had lived the practical and exemplary life that Jesus lived. He drew multitudes to him because of the life he was living. To this day the reason for people to come to Christ is nothing else but because of his life, his sacrificial life. The practical and exemplary life expected from every Christian, as Paul said is *“to imitate Christ”* (1Cor. 11: 1). That life has power for the growth of the Church, for it draws many to Christ.

#### **4.15. Handling Members with Care**

One of the main resources for the congregation is her members. They are the source for all the needs of the congregation. They come to a congregation not by force, but voluntary. They have their own freedom to stay in that congregation or leave or change their membership. The more care they get, love they are shown, and good handling, the better is for the congregation, and this helps the members to remain faithfully in their congregation and devote themselves to the ministries.

People often move from one Church to another for different reasons. One of the reasons why they change their membership is when they do not find good handling and care in their congregation. Therefore, congregations have to give due attention to take care of their members and work hard on their lives in order to help them grow constantly.

Handling and care include visit of members at their homes or their working places, comforting them with the word of God when they face challenges in life like death of the beloved one, and also it could be financial support for those in need. Evangelists and pastors of these congregations practice this reality by preparing weekly program for visiting their members at homes and at their working places in weekdays. Sometimes they call some of them to their offices for counselling and exhortation in the weekends. Different groups in the congregation have their own way of caring for their members. For example, they visit each member at home, provide material support, comfort and counsel the family.

#### **4.16. Clear and Indicative Long and Short Term Strategic Plans**

According to Mintzberg, planning is “*a formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions.*”<sup>170</sup> Any planner, be it a Church or an individual, makes decisions at every step of his work because it goes with what he thinks of the future and how he is going to do it.

Decisions always demand that one chooses among things to be done, and therefore, things to be done have to be prioritized. Then a planner has to

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<sup>170</sup> Mintzberg, Henry 1994: 12

commit himself to his decisions to implement them in due time in order to get better or desired results.

To put into practice a plan, the planner has to have strategies which help him put the first thing first and the second, second. A strategic plan is the way to organize things to be done in a proper way and in due time.

If a congregation does not have a plan at all, it does not know what to do and when to do things. Nowadays, most of the congregations of EECMY have begun to develop their own yearly plans in order to accomplish their evangelistic work and other activities effectively.

Some of them have developed short-term and long-term strategic plans that guide them for three to five years. For example, Addis Ababa congregation and Tabor congregation have already developed five-year strategic plan with clear and indicative goals and purposes. From their strategic plan, it is possible to see how it is useful for the growth of the congregation. Because for every year of the strategic plan and months, what to be done and who is going to do is clearly indicated. In the same manner, every committee and member in the congregation knows what is expected from them, and also the congregation knows where to reach in five years and what to do.

#### **4.17. Strategic Site of the Congregation**

One of my informants repeatedly mentioned about the necessity of having a strategic site for the local congregation which causes her growth. I asked him why. He said,

*“For example, if the congregation is in a hidden place do you think people would come to worship there? Rather they would prefer to go to a Church they can find it easily.”<sup>171</sup>*

A congregation located at the centre of the living areas, Universities and Colleges, business and governmental areas is more privileged with members than the isolated areas. As I pointed out when I discussed about the history of Addis Ababa congregation, one of the reasons for her growth was the strategic site she had from the very beginning. Even today she is

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<sup>171</sup> Dr. Kebede Mulatu o. i: 26/09/07, Awassa

surrounded by Universities, governmental offices, and also very close to the business areas. The same is true for Tabor congregation in Awassa. People have easy access to these congregations and also these congregations have a chance to communicate with them easily.

#### **4.18. Cooperation and Partnership**

In the English text prepared for grade seven I was taught some thing which remained in my mind to this time. It was a topic about *“Unity is Strength.”* I also remember a story told me by my parents when I was a child. The story goes like this,

*“There were four oxen went astray from the shepherd in the bush. They stayed overnight in the jungle and all of a sudden a Lion came wishing to devour them, but he couldn’t. The reason was that the four of them were united to fight against the Lion by facing back-to-back to watch at four different directions. The Lion finally decided to disunite them so that he could easily devour them. His plan was successful and he separated one of them from the others and ate it. With the same strategy he succeeded to eat all of them in the end.”<sup>172</sup>*

If the oxen had stayed together in unity they would not have been eaten by the Lion, but when their unity began to fall apart, it was easy for the Lion to devour them.

There is a good lesson from this short story. When the churches have cooperation and unity, they have power and strength to accomplish their tasks and grow constantly. On the other hand, when they loose their unity and cooperation, they open the door for Satan so that he could work against their strength and growth.

The three congregations, as I observed, have understood this reality and they are working hard in the area of cooperation and partnership. For example, Tabor congregation has cooperation and partnership with Memorial

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<sup>172</sup> This story is a story told me by my parents when I was a child which I still remember. It can be found in many languages and countries. The content might be the same but the way it is presented could be different.

Lutheran Church (MLC), Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), Bonga Bethel Congregation, and Compassion International Ethiopia (CIE) in the area of outreach, in- land mission work and social services. The same is true also for Addis Ababa congregation. She has cooperation and partnership with WBS, in the area of outreach work. This cooperation and partnership has contributed a lot to their growth. The more they devote themselves to cooperation and partnership, the more they are getting power to do the evangelistic work that leads them to fast growth.

#### **4.19. Well-Educated and prominent Personnel**

The two informants from Addis Ababa congregation strongly underlined the importance of having well-educated and qualified personnel in their congregation. They often mentioned persons like Emanuel Abraham who was one of the top officials at the time of Emperor Haile Selassie I. He stood up for the cause of the congregation and other churches during hard times. They also mentioned prominent personnel like generals, top officials, ministers, governors, and top traders or merchants who had good reputation in their areas, and because of them the congregation could gain fame and reputation. That reputation, as my informants explained, had helped AAMYC and most of the EECMY congregations not to be closed by the communist government back in 1970s. These members contributed a lot to the leadership of the congregation so that she grew constantly at the time of hardship.

Today also as the two other congregations confirm, well-educated and prominent personnel are the back bone for the growth of their congregations. The more congregations have such personnel as members and at different offices in the government and other places, the better it is for the congregations for they are defenders of their own congregations.

Dodola congregation has been one of the congregations with challenges from her commencement till now due to the Muslim community. It was and is very hard to find a plot of land for Church buildings and funerals for their outreach centres. But wherever they found the aforementioned personnel to be their members, the problem is solved and the outreach is growing in the midst of challenges and difficulties.

#### 4.20. Home Cells or House Churches

One of the reasons for the growth of the Early Church was the small churches they had in believers' home. For example, the house Church at Priscilla's and Aquila's home, as it is mentioned in Romans 16: 3-5.

In home cells or house churches believers have the possibility to know each other well and discuss every point of their lives which help them to grow spiritually. Bible studies are one of the tools for the spiritual growth of believers in the home cells or house churches.

Home cells are means for the growth of the Church at the time of persecution. In Ethiopian history, Christianity had faced two severe persecutions. The first one was at the time of Italian occupation (1936-1941), and the second was at the time of military regime in 1974-1991. During the first persecution, the Italians forced the western missionaries to leave the country in order to weaken the infant evangelical churches.<sup>173</sup> It was reported that there were only 150 evangelical believers in 1939 before the western missionaries were forced to leave the country, but at the end of the occupation, in 1941, there were nearly 30,000 believers who have survived the persecution and were growing in the home cells or underground churches.<sup>174</sup> At military regime's persecution, when many pastors and evangelists as well as believers were hunted either to be jailed or killed, evangelical believers were growing in underground churches or home cells. The report shows that there were 1.5 million evangelical believers in 1974 but at the down fall of Dergue in 1991, the number of evangelical believers had grown to 3.8 million.<sup>175</sup>

According to my informants, the three congregations have several home cell programs in their congregations. About 8 to 10 families gather together once a week for sharing the word of God and prayer. As their members come for meeting in home cells they often invite their non-Christian neighbours to join them and have fellowship together. Their neighbours come in the name of fellowship but they will get a chance to hear the word of God,

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<sup>173</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 19

<sup>174</sup> Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Ibid

to which some of them respond and join the Church. This is a practical example of how the congregations are growing.

#### **4.21. Holistic Ministries**

Gudina Tumsa, who served the EECMY in the capacity of General Secretary from 1966 until he was murdered by the Military regime in 1979, was the originator of the idea of Holistic approach, which helped the Church to be known for her motto of “*Serving the Whole Person.*” He was the source for the letter sent to Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which demands the balance between Evangelism and Human development.<sup>176</sup>

The foundation for the holistic ministry was laid in 1971 because of the high demand for the evangelistic outreach, nurturing of members, church buildings, and training of ministers for the congregational work which she believed was her primary obligation and for the development and social services of the Church.

There was an imbalance of allocation of funds from the overseas partners, for they earmarked huge amount of money for the development and social services rather than the Evangelistic work.

As both duties were the responsibilities of the Church and the Church wanted to bring balance between her two ministries, the Church officers discussed the issue thoroughly and with the consent of the General Assembly produced the policy document with the title “*On the Interrelationship Between Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development*”, and sent the document to the LWF, for which the Church received appreciation.<sup>177</sup>

The EECMY has been performing holistic ministries based on the conviction that the spiritual and the material needs imply an integral human development; therefore, they should be seen together. For that reason all development and social services are serving as a means for the proclamation of the word of God and have supported the Church to grow fast.

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<sup>176</sup> Gudina Tumsa Foundation 2003: 81; Eide, Øyvind M 2000: 119

<sup>177</sup> Gudina Tumsa Foundation 2003: 81: A paper entitled “The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Holistic Development (Ministry)” presented by Ato Wodajo Woldesenbet to the workshop participants of EECMY-DASSC held in Awassa in November 2005: 2

Based on the policy of EECMY, in order to “serve the whole person”, the three congregations have been providing different holistic ministries like, schools, HIV/AIDS prevention and control, Care for PLWHA, vocational trainings, agriculture- mission, and so on. What has been observed so far is that these activities have contributed a lot to the growth of these congregations. The people getting benefits from these programs or services join these congregations in one way or the other.

#### **4.22. Financial Capacity**

As long as the Church is on this earth, she needs finance for her ministries. No activity of the Church, whether it is evangelistic or humanitarian, will be accomplished without the necessary finance means.

The ministers of the word need salary as the Scripture says, “*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain*’, and *‘The labourer is worthy of his wages’*” (1Tim. 5: 18). Otherwise, they cannot survive and be able to preach the good news to others. The more the Church has resources and financial capacity, the better she grows.

One of my informants explains the reasons why the congregations in Bale have not grown like the Tabor congregation in Awassa. One reason might be that the congregation is located in the midst of challenges from Muslims. The Islam religion is growing at an alarming rate probably because of the resources they get from the Arab world. In Ethiopia Christian revival seems to be weak in Islam dominated areas. It seems to be easier to plant congregations in the areas where traditional religion has been strong. Another reason could be the scarcity of finance in the congregations. Those people who came to Church at the first time were not wealthy people. Most of them were poor, weak, women and youth who have no power to decide on economic matter, according to the culture. They were dependant on the Church.<sup>178</sup>

The persecuted, the poor, and people challenged in many ways need support from the Church. If the Church is not ready to cope with the situation and reject these people they will look for other possibilities, which will lead

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<sup>178</sup> Informant “A” o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

them to leave the Church. Therefore, the Church needs to maximize her financial capacity in order to keep its growth.

#### **4.23. Healthy Relationship and Communication with Local Community**

The Church grows in her cultural context. The local community are bound to their culture, tradition and way of life. The Church that wants to grow effectively should not set aside the local community of the area, for she cannot grow without having the believers from the local community. This is one part of effective communication the Church needs. When the Church identifies and has effective communication with the local community, she will be effective in her ministry and can grow as fast as she can because local community are the power for her ministry.

My informant from Dodola shared me the following idea in regard to how the local community are useful for the evangelism work.

*“At the arrival of missionaries in Bale area, they used evangelists from other tribes and areas, not from the local community. The local community never accepted them because of the cultural differences and languages. The evangelists were using Amharic language to communicate with the local community rather than with the local Oromo language. Few only came to Christianity. But after some time when the missionaries began using the local evangelists and the evangelists started teaching and preaching to their own local community using their own culture as a tool, people started coming to faith. In Oromo culture there is what they call kinship system. The evangelists used their kinship system to preach to their relatives either in group or one by one. Little by little they got acceptance and the Church began growing.”<sup>179</sup>*

#### **4. 24. Developing Successors**

According to Rev. Markos, the assistant pastor of AAMYC, at least there are three generations in the one congregation: the Children, the Youth

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<sup>179</sup> Informant “B” o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

and the Elderly People.<sup>180</sup> One of the responsibilities of the congregation is to keep these generations together in the congregation without creating gaps between them.

The growth of the congregation is based on the sustainability of these generations. If a gap is created there is no one to take up the responsibility of that congregation and finally it stops growing.

The evangelistic work of the congregation is like a rally sport. A runner in the rally sport usually passes his stick to other person ahead of him in order to win the race. If one of the runner stops at a point or not willing to pass the stick to the one ahead of him, the team cannot win the race.

The logic is also true for the congregation. Therefore, the elderly people in the congregation have to pass the stick of evangelism to the next generation which is the Youth and the Youth to the Children. In this way the evangelistic work of the congregation will continue from generation to generation, and the congregation continues growing.

A congregation that does not give due attention to the successors cannot grow because as Maxwell says, “*success without successor is failure.*”<sup>181</sup> Therefore, what is expected from the leaders of the congregation is to develop their successors.

When they do this they will get someone who will take the responsibility of the congregation. By doing this they are fulfilling what the Bible teaches us about how the prominent leaders had developed their successors. For example, Moses developed Joshua, Jesus developed the twelve disciples, and Paul developed Timothy and Titus.

#### **4.25. Clear Organizational Structure, Constitution and By-laws**

A Church is an organizational spiritual body. As an organizational body in order to perform her duties in an effective and better way she needs structure, constitution and by-laws. Organizational structure, constitution and by-laws are indicators for what to do, who does and the responsibilities of those in the structure.

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<sup>180</sup> Rev. Markos Hadero o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

<sup>181</sup> Maxwell, John C 1993: 9

The three congregations have strong organizational structures, constitutions and by-laws right from their commencement, which has been used to enhance their growth.

The revision of organizational structures, constitutions and by-laws indicate how that congregation has been developing expanding and growing. For example, in the case of Addis Ababa congregation within her century of ministry has revised her constitution and by-laws five times<sup>182</sup>, whereas Tabor congregation has revised three times.<sup>183</sup> Every time the revision of the constitution results in the amendment of structures.

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<sup>182</sup> Enaat Mekane Yesus 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Evangelistic Work (1904-2004): 45

<sup>183</sup> Ato Alemayehu Hanaga o. i: 05/10/07, Awassa

## **Chapter Five: Hindrances to the Growth of Local congregations**

The aspiration of any Church is to grow and expand. Growth is not only mere wish but essential and decisive for the existence of a healthy Church. While the Church is striving for this essential quality, there are some stumbling blocks which hinder her from growing. The hindrances to the growth of local congregations are different from country to country and from congregation to congregation.

The people I have interviewed from the three congregations have shared about the hindrances to the growth of local congregations from their long time experience and what they have encountered.

According to them, these hindrances are not only unique to their congregations, but are common to all or widely shared with most local congregations. Of course, there are some hindrances that are not shared with other congregations. In this study, I focused only on the hindrances that are widely shared by most local congregations. The responsibility of the leaders of local congregations is, first, to know what kind of hindrances exist in their local congregations, and secondly to work out a plan to find possible solutions, as that the hindrances will not grow and stop the congregations from growing.

Here are some of the major hindrances to the growth of local congregations.

### **5.1. Lack of Godly Life**

Christians are called to live a life worthy of their calling because the one who called them is holy and they are also called to be holy. *“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’”* (1Pet. 1: 15-16).

It is only when Christians live godly lives that they can reflect their holy God, and bring positive impact on the lives of others, or be able to lead others to Christ. If they are not living godly lives, it will be difficult for them to lead those outside the Church to Christ, for no one will listen to them.

Nowadays because of modernity there are a lot of influences on the youth in the Church. According to my informants, the manifestation of some of

these influences are seen on some of the youth from marriages without the consensus of the Church, sex before marriage and adultery due to the distribution of secular films, and unwillingness to devote oneself to become disciples of Jesus Christ. They would like to live secular lives in the Church. If they are asked why they are doing these, often they say *'we have freedom to do whatever we want. If you want to put pressure on us, we can leave the Church for you.'* This is a great challenge for the leaders as well as to the growth of the Church.

One of the cries of the leaders of the three congregations is related to this kind of problem. They have been observing high influence on the youth from the distributions of secular films and what they see from televisions. Of course, they are concluding that not all of them are under these influences. There are some who devoted themselves to live godly life and be models for others.

The expectation of leaders from their members and as Christians what is expected from them is to dress up themselves with decent clothes especially when they come to churches. Specifically, ladies should not be seen naked from their chest or wear shorts and trousers. In the area like Dodola, where it is predominantly Muslim, even wearing trousers by women is offensive. Muslims and the uneducated local community mostly relate those who wear trousers with bar ladies. Therefore, Christians should dress up themselves with decent clothes that may not be offensive for non-believers either in the Church compound or elsewhere. This is because for they are ambassadors of Christ on this earth. Those outside the Church can only see Christ in them. If they cannot show Christ in their daily lives, no one would listen to what they say or to their testimonies.

Mostly, non-Christians would like to raise questions when they find the same life as they are living before they came to Church. One of their questions is: what is the benefit for us to come to Church and be members, if we still find the same life in the Church? This is a challenge to the growth of the Church.

## 5.2. Division and Split Among Christians

Jesus Christ prayed for the unity of believers. *“Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.... And the glory which You have given Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one”* John 17: 11, 22.

As Father and Son are one, are those who believe in Christ one, especially those in the same denomination and congregation are one and they are one family. As one family, they should reveal the bond that tie them together, and therefore, cooperate and work together.

The more they unite and cooperate, the more are they able to demonstrate the power and strength they have in unity, which is good for their growth both spiritually and numerically. Avoiding this unity and unwillingness to cooperate will lead the Church into different groups based on local languages and ethnicity, which will end in the split of the Church. Such kind of Church cannot grow.

The division and split of churches as well as Christians, will close the door for new believers. Once they know it, they would regret coming and prefer to go back to their former life.

According to one of my informants from Tabor congregation once there was an incident of split in their congregation. Seven families who were worshipping together at one of the home cells remained behind from the congregation Sunday services and began their own worship. When the case was known to the leaders, they called the leader of the group to know what has happened. His answer was not clear. He covered up their cases with that they have received a message from God to depart themselves from the congregation. The secret behind was not what he told to the leaders of the congregation. All of those seven families were from the same ethnic group and they were close friends. Their hidden agenda and motive were to have a Church based on their own ethnic group and with that to divide the congregation accordingly.

The leaders of the congregation confronted them that the message they claim they have received from God is not genuine, for God does not allow His Church to be split. Leaders advised them several times and waited for them for more than two months to be back to their own

congregation but they were not ready and willing to do so. The group officially opened their own Church. Finally the leaders announced for the members that these people are no more belong to this congregation.

As my informant goes on explaining, for the time being it was a challenge for the growth of the congregation because there were others who wanted to join that group. If this had happened, it would have been a great schism for the congregation and she would not have grown thus far. Since three families from those who left the congregation returned back and repented, the issue was settled. They repented public to the assembly that what they did was wrong and they have not benefited from leaving their mother congregation. They were accepted to the congregation with love.<sup>184</sup>

### **5.3. Growth Problem**

Growth is essential for churches and Christians spiritually, numerically and physically. The same is true for organizations, for they need growth.

What makes a difference between the growth of a Church and an organization is that the growth of a Church always needs a balance between ministers and the number of members. If the number of ministers is less compared to the number of members, they cannot serve them equally. This will bring dissatisfaction in the Church. It has to be solved in due time, otherwise, it will bring the decline of members for they will look to a place that is more convenient for them. Balancing the number of ministers with that of the members will help the Church to avoid the problem.

All the three congregations have been growing numerically for the last ten years, but as I observed from their statistics, the number of ministers they have is not in balance with their members. For example, AAC and Tabor have nearly two and three thousand members respectively while they have only two pastors each. Approximately one pastor gives service for about 1000 people in the case of AAC, and 1500 people in the case of Tabor. These pastors are not only responsible for the pastoral ministries (funerals, baptism, Holy Communion, counseling, marriages, visitation, teaching, admonishing, and the like) of their congregations, but also for the outreach centres their

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<sup>184</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o. i: 29/09/07, Awassa

congregations administering. At times, they have to travel to the outreach centres in case of need. Can they treat and serve their members equally? Or can they reach to every member as they want? This is why I am saying the numerical growth of members should be balanced with the ministers. Therefore, leaders of the local congregations have to be aware of this kind of problem and ready to solve it in due time, otherwise, they may lose their members for people are always looking for the better treatment.

#### **5.4. Lack of Knowledge**

The Bible underlines the necessity of knowledge. *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”* (Hosea 4: 6). The true knowledge is obtained only from God, for He is the source of all knowledge. Failing to learn from God will lead astray. The Church has no option than to listen to God and learn from him, if she wants to grow.

Leaders of the congregation have to alert and know ahead of time, especially what is going on in their congregation, for example, if there are false and unbiblical teachings, for these kind of teachings are dangerous to the growth of the local congregations.

My informants from the three congregations mentioned how powerful the so called “spiritual movements and revivals” are. The youth and innocent people in the Church are very fond of these kind of movements. They often go to different churches where they hear there is a spiritual movement and revival. The freedom of religion given by the current government have paved a way for many faith groups within the country. Some of these are not doctrinally and biblically sound. Those who went and participated in these kind of movements and revivals, when they come back to their congregations often would like to exercise and practice what they have seen and taught there, whether it goes with the doctrine of their congregations, or biblically sound. These kind of practices will lead the congregation from its noble path of growth.<sup>185</sup>

If leaders are ignorant to these kind of problems and to what is going on in their congregations, they do not know how to lead their congregations. If

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<sup>185</sup> Ato Feleke Tibebe o.i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa: Ato Eyasu Tagicho o.i: 20/09/07, Awassa

they are aware of it, they will correct it before it grows to a maximum level where they cannot stop and correct. But if they are ignorant or leave it to be practiced in their congregations, their congregations cannot grow. This is because they always struggle with the problem and cannot get time to plan for the growth of their congregations.

### **5.5. Missing the Aim**

One of the aims for the people of God is to worship Him with all their hearts, with all their souls and with all their minds. A congregation that misses the centrality of worship cannot grow.

Worship is not only coming together to sing and listen to the word of God. It goes beyond, for it demands honoring God. Failing to do this will put the congregation on a different track than to growth.

Sunday is a day of worship where all the members of local congregations are expected to come together and worship their God. It is a day that all members meet and encourage one another. On the other hand, it is also a day of rest where every one wants to be at his home to relax. According to my informants, there is a tendency of remaining behind from worship programs by some of the members on Sundays in the name of taking rest or watching televisions. This is what I mean missing the aim. Even though Sunday is a day of rest, for Christians the priority is to come to worship programs and be encouraged by the word of God and one another rather than giving priority to give rest for the flesh. This can be done after the worship program in the afternoon time.

There is a benefit of worshipping God. A congregation worships God will receive guidance, as for example, the Church at Antioch received a clear message from the Lord that Saul and Barnabas should be sent to the work which the Lord called them to (Acts 13: 2). The same is true for the present churches. If they devote themselves to worship God, He will guide them to the right directions of growth.

### **5.6. Making Oneself Idle**

As a spiritual body of Christ, Church members are tied to one another into this body. As far as they are in this body, they have a task to accomplish

depending on their talents, skill, knowledge and spiritual gifts given to them by God. No one is idle in this body. The human body has different parts that work together for the benefit of one person. The same is also true for each member of the congregation. They work for the growth of their congregation.

God has brought every one to the Church with a special purpose and calling. All have something to accomplish in the body. Making oneself idle will affect the growth of the Church.

It is when the whole congregation works together for the advancement of the kingdom of God that the Church grows. At times, as one of my informants says, there are some members who make themselves idle and do not take part in the activities of the congregation. They often want to criticize what others are doing.<sup>186</sup>

The more the Church members cooperate and work together, the more they will grow. Therefore, being idle and isolating oneself from the community of the congregation will slow the growth of the congregation.

### **5.7. The Prolonged Period of Leadership**

Leaders are gifts for the congregation from God. He has a purpose to be accomplished in a given period of time when calls someone to the leadership position in the congregation. The responsibility of leaders is to understand God's purpose in their life in a given time and fulfill that. Failing to understand God's plan and purpose usually leads most leaders to stay in the leadership for a prolonged time, which brings dissatisfaction among the members. To avoid this, leaders have to leave their position for others when they feel that they have finished what God has intended to do by them.

According to EECMY, the longest time one can stay in leadership is for two years in the congregation level and four years at the Synod and higher levels. He/she can be reelected for additional two or four years terms, but not more than that.

In some congregations, due to ignorance and love for the position, some would love to stay for more than the given period. What is proven so far is that the growth in that kind of congregations is low. Therefore, leaders must

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<sup>186</sup> Dr. Kebede Mulatu o.i: 26/09/07, Awassa

leave their positions in due time for new leaders to have new ideas and visions.

The prolonged time of leadership will lead leaders to be dictators in their leadership. Once they are dictators, they stop accepting new ideas and visions. Their leadership will be monotonous and boring. A congregation with dictator leaders cannot grow.

### **5.8. Giving Central Place for Activities rather than God**

Activities in the Church are not equivalent to God. Christ is the head of the Church and the centre of all her activities. All activities in the Church are centred around Him, not the other way around. The more the Church focuses on the activities rather than God, the more that Church will be stagnant and not proactive. God is the owner of all the activities in the Church. Therefore, the Church must put Him at the center of her activities, if she wants to grow.

There are tendencies in some churches nowadays to do things the other way around, by placing activities in the centre and God at the periphery. This is like putting the cart before the horse and trying to ride it. This is impossible because the horse cannot move a step ahead. The same is true for the Church too. The Church grows when she puts God at the centre of all her activities.

### **5.9. Lack of Unity, Misunderstanding, Conflict and Gap**

Since 1991, the Ethiopian churches have experienced the problem of language and ethnicity due to the ethnically based administration of the country. People are more tending to their own ethnic groups and languages, which has been resulting the difference in ideology and understanding things. With that also the love of money and search for fame are increasing. All the above mentioned issues are very sensitive and they are the sources for lack of unity, misunderstanding, and conflict.

The upcoming of misunderstanding and conflict in the Church have been bringing gaps between leaders, ministers and members, which have been resulting in the split of churches or congregations, as for example mentioned under point “5.2” in the same chapter. Some of the people who left their congregations have no clear reasons. Their reasons mainly based on

misunderstandings- the way they understood things and they way their leaders understood were different.

The EECMY has experienced a split once in her 49 years ministry in 2001 due to the language case, which resulted in the establishment of the Addis Ababa and Surrounding of Mekane Yesus Church. The split came because of misunderstanding, lack of cooperation and a gap between leaders in understanding of how to use and handle the language case.

The leaders of the three congregations were refering to that split as one of the hindrances to the growth of EECMY. They mentioned that it has some impact on their areas of ministiries because when their ministers approach to some people to witness about Christ, especially those who know about the split in the Church often say, *“You yourselves have no peace and could not agree. Why do you invite me to this kind of Church? First, go and reconcile, settle your matters and come back to us again.”*

#### **5.10. Competition among Churches**

The Ethiopian churches have been experiencing high competetion among themselves for several decades. One of the bases for their competition was the interest to have a high number of membership to get fame and reputation with that from the local community. The interest was not bad by itself but the motive behind and the action followed were what makes it unacceptable.

They could have made high number of membership by evangelizing the Un-reached people groups (UPGs) within the country for there were 35 UPGs comprising 23,804,644 people in Ethiopia in 2005, according to the study done by the ECFE. This number was about 40.7% of the 86 ethnic groups of Ethiopia by then.<sup>187</sup> Instead, the churches were snatching members from one another. Due to this the growth of Ethiopian churches was not as it should be.

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<sup>187</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 55

### **5.11. Unbiblical Revival and Teachings Contrary to the Bible**

All unbiblical revival, wrong spiritual movements and experiences as well as false teachings contrary to the truth of the Bible are from the Devil. Because the Bible tells us that the Devil is the father of a lie and he himself is a liar (John 8: 44). Those who follow him always fulfill his will, and they are the source for unbiblical revival and heretic teachings. False prophets were there from the beginning of the Church and they are still found in and around the churches (Acts 13: 6).

Most spiritual movements seem good at the outset and usually they draw many. As Rev. Markos explains, there were some prominent Church ministers who were taken by unbiblical revival and wrong spiritual movements from his congregation at the beginning of 1990s. He affirms that, if they were able to stay in the truth of the Bible and in their mother congregation, they could have contributed a lot to the growth of their congregation.<sup>188</sup>

Other challenge from Dodola area was that Muslims were preparing teaching against the truth of the Bible and used to broadcast by the microphone in the open market area and in music shops. Because of that there were a conflict between the Muslim community and Christians which had taken the issue to the Zonal administration until it was solved by ordering the Muslims to stop provocative teachings.<sup>189</sup> Any one can imagine how many innocent people can be confused and leave their faith due to these kinds challenges.

Generally speaking, unbiblical revival, wrong spiritual movements and teachings contrary to the Bible have been challenges and hindrances to the growth of the Church.

### **5.12. Individualism**

Individualism has been one of the major killing factors for many churches globally in the time of modernity. The focus of individualism is putting oneself at the centre of everything and being unwilling to sacrifice for the sake of others.

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<sup>188</sup> Rev. Markos Hadero o. i: 15/10/07, Addis Ababa

<sup>189</sup> Informant "A" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

The principle in the Church is to give more focus to others than oneself, or in other words, to live for others rather than oneself, as the Lord Jesus taught us and demonstrated.

The growth of individualism in the Church has been cracking down the bond and unity of members which has been a hindrance to the growth of the Church.

The Ethiopian culture and society is more collective than individualistic. With the collective society, people are very open to each other and they can speak directly to one another freely. The Church community should be even more open to one another. They can speak directly to a Christian brother and sister if they see some thing wrong in the life of that person.

But in the cities like Addis Ababa, where people are more westernized and individualism is increasing, nowadays, leaders are losing their power to discipline and speak directly to the one in a wrong path. If they discipline him/her, he/she would not accept the discipline innocently as it was done earlier, rather would leave the congregation and join other faith groups. The more the leaders lose their power and authority over their members, the worse that church begins to split apart. Therefore, the increasing of individualism in the Ethiopian churches is a threat and hindrance to their growth.

### **5.13. Gap between Generations in the Churches**

As it has been pointed out earlier in this paper, there are three generations in the Church: children, youth, and grown-ups. These three generations of people are important and have equal value for the Church. It is only when the Church cares for them equally that she can continue growing. Once a gap is created, it would be difficult for that Church to grow. Therefore, the church has to give due attention to make sure that the categories of people in the three generations are taken care of in a sustainable manner.

To avert the gap that may be created, the first thing the Church has to do is to strengthen her Children's ministry because the children today are the youth and grown-ups of tomorrow.

One of the major problems of the western churches is their neglect of Children's ministry. For example, here in Norway as I observed and

understood, in the State church, the children's ministry has been given to an organization and the church is not teaching them any more which, I assume, is a great lose for the church. Therefore, it is seldom to find children in the State churches except those brought by their parents. It would be very difficult for the church to close this type of gap for it takes a generation. The gap in the generations of people in the church can make a church empty at a certain point in time.

#### **5.14. Nepotism**

No one would imagine there is nepotism in the Church, but from the reality what can be observed, it seems that wherever human beings are, there is nepotism.

Nepotism can display itself in many ways. Some of its manifestations are seen from people showing favoritism to ones relatives, for example, in the area of offering employment to a relative even if there are other better qualified persons.

The people of God in one Church are brothers and sisters in Christ and all of them have equal right to get benefit from their churches. The leaders of the Church have a responsibility to treat all of them equally. If they forget this and begin to give favor for their relatives in the area of employment (the employment can be for the position of priesthood or evangelist), the rest of members would begin looking for a church where the leaders give equitable treatment to all their members.

One of my informants from Tabor congregation have shared me the challenge the congregation once faced due to the misinterpretation of what the elders board have done in the area of employment. It was some years back that the congregation wanted to employ a person for the position of a cashier. The congregation posted the annoncemnt to her bulletin board so that the qualified could apply for it among her members. After some week, the elders' looked into the applications to decide who has to take the position. Before they looked into the applications, they prepared rules to follow and criteria to how to nominate among the applicants. Following the criteria they decided who won the contest. Fortunately the wife of one of the evengelists won the contest among the applicants.

When the elders knew that the one qualified for the position was the wife of one of the evangelists, they were afraid that for others who applied for the position, it may seem that they favoured the evangelists. They had no option rather than deciding. They did it and posted the result to let the applicants who won the contest.

What they were afraid of was immediately reacted by those who did not win the contest. They spoke out to the elders that what they did was nepotism. Actually what the elders did was not nepotism. They nominated according to the criteria they have prepared. As far as the lady won the contest, they cannot say to her we cannot give you the position for we are afraid of being counted as we did favoritism.

According to my informant, there were some who wanted to use the opportunity to shake the unity of the congregation and create the split within the congregation. Since the elders posted the result on the bulletin board and how they did the nomination, the issue was clear for all members and no one was moved by those who wanted to use the opportunity.<sup>190</sup>

### **5.15. Persecution**

At the beginning of the Early Church persecution was mainly from the Jewish community. For the Ethiopian churches nowadays, persecution comes mainly from two spheres. The first one, which is of greater threat, is from the Muslim community. They persecute someone who is converted to Christianity. Their persecution extends to the extent of killing or expelling that person from their families/communities. They even burn churches, as for example, in Dodola area at a place called Nensebo.<sup>191</sup>

The second persecution is from the Orthodox believers. They do this because they presume that the Orthodox Church is the only legitimate Christian church of the country and the rest are newcomers or recent arrivals. They consider other denominations as a belief that has come with relief wheat, and sometimes they call them a 'belief of wheat'. They often persecute

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<sup>190</sup> Ato Eyasu Tagicho o.i: 29/09/07, Awassa

<sup>191</sup> Informant "B" o. i: 30/10/07, Dodola

their own children when they join the Evangelical churches. This kind of persecution could be compared to the first centuries' persecution.

The persecution from Muslim community is not surprising because Christianity and Islam are two different religions. None of them like their community members to leave them and join another religion. But they do not seem to understand that every person has the right/freedom of choosing the faith he/she likes. This is what the constitution of the country clearly states.

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to hold or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”<sup>192</sup>*

Where there is persecution, there is always few numbers of believers. This is because people have a fear to be expelled from their community. Dodola congregation is a good example. Within the last fifty five years of ministry they have faced a lot of persecution and because of that they have less members when we compare it with other congregations like Tabor where there is no influence from Muslims.

Persecution purifies the faith of believers. On the other hand, it is also a challenge to the growth of the Church. It may make the number of believers few in the area but cannot stop the church from growing.

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<sup>192</sup> Current Ethiopian Constitution, article 27 number 1, taken from the following web page [http://www.civicwebs.com/cwvlib/constitutions/ethiopia/constitution\\_1994.htm](http://www.civicwebs.com/cwvlib/constitutions/ethiopia/constitution_1994.htm)

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

The main objective of this study is to find out factors sustaining the growth of local congregations and the hindrances to their growth, in relation to the evangelistic work of the local congregations. Three congregations of the EECMY are taken as samples to look into these factors and hindrances.

Brief history of the three congregations is presented to know who they are and what they have been doing in the area of evangelizing the un-reached groups of people. Brief comparative analysis of what makes one congregation different from the rest of two and of the numerical growth is also described. Before describing the brief history of the three congregations, in the historical background chapter, the brief history of Ethiopia, how Christianity and Protestantism came to the country, and the brief account of the three Synods of EECMY to which the three congregations are belonging is discussed to give the readers the historical background for the three congregations.

As it is showed in the findings, twenty five major factors that promote or sustain the growth of local congregations are discussed briefly. Fifteen major hindrances to the growth of local congregations are also outlined and discussed. The promoting factors are opportunities for the local congregations if their leaders use them accordingly to enhance the growth of their congregations. On the other hand, hindrances are threats always the local congregations are living with or in. Therefore, the leaders of local congregations have to be alert in identifying what kind of hindrances are there that are threats for the growth and to tackle them in due time before the threats are grown to level they cannot manage it.

The study also tried to unveil the opportunities exist today in Ethiopia that help the local congregations to grow fast, if they make use of them in due time.

As it has been said earlier, the major opportunities the Ethiopia churches have this days are: the freedom of Religion, a strong Evangelical Churches fellowship which organizes them to be more productive in their ministries, and the long influence of the EOC, which somehow preserved

Christian values through arts and literature is a good ground for spreading the good news of the Lord Jesus before Islam overtakes the country. In addition to these, a high percentage of Children and Youth in the churches is a great hope for the churches because 82.5% of the Evangelical churches of Ethiopia are Children and Youth under the age of 36.<sup>193</sup> Children and youth are more productive than any other groups in the Church, if the church gives them due care. This indicates that the future of the Church is bright, and she can grow as fast as she can, if she uses the privileges wisely. 35 UPGs in the country are also an additional privilege for the local congregations of Ethiopia, for they can target them to evangelize and grow numerically.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

Growth is a characteristic of a healthy Church. If the Church is healthy in all aspects of her ministries including leaders, ministers and members, and if the leaders, members and ministers have compassion and commitment for the growth of their church, she will grow.

To make more effective and productive growth of local congregations, the following recommendations are presented.

1. Local congregations should focus on creating one heart and develop commitment among leaders by teaching and encouraging them (1Tim: 5:17).
2. Ineffective leadership of local congregations cannot cope with the growth of the Church; therefore, it is strongly recommended that local congregations must work on to create a strong and dynamic lay leadership.
3. Local congregations must concentrate on consequent, bold and strong biblical teaching and training for the renewal of believers in order to make them disciples of Jesus Christ according to the word of God (Matthew 28: 18-20). Otherwise, their members cannot stand

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<sup>193</sup> Lemma Degefa 2005: 56

firm in their faiths confronted with the unbiblical revival, misleading spiritual movements and unhealthy teachings contrary to the Bible.

4. Equitable treatment of members in local congregations should be practiced by the leadership. Leaders of local congregations must treat their members equitably without discriminating against them either by gender or race.
5. Local congregations have to give due attention to the main task of the Church, which is evangelism (Mark 16:15) rather than spend their time on unnecessary matters that hinder the work of evangelisation. Every activity in the local congregations has to pave the way for evangelising un-reached groups of people in one way or the other.
6. Local congregations must give priority for the unity of believers. This unity comes especially when leaders visit and follow up the believers in their congregations closely; and also by teaching and training them to do the same.
7. The youth in the local congregations has to be given a chance for the leadership position in the Church to have new vision. The local congregations must focus also on the sustainability of the three generations in the Church - the grown-ups, the youth, and the children.
8. Children and Youth are tomorrow's hope for the local congregations. Therefore, their ministries have to be strengthened and full-time ministers must be assigned to their ministries.
9. Prayer is one of the pillars to the growth of local congregations. It brings true revival and the mighty hand of God. Therefore, it should not be neglected. Leaders must pray to God and encourage their members to pray to God at all times either individually or in groups.

10. Opening up to the Holy Spirit and His spiritual gifts to work, be exercised and manifested in the local congregations is decisive for the growth of local congregations. Therefore, they should not be a hindrance for the manifestations of the Holy Spirit and His spiritual gifts to work among their members.
11. Planning shows what, when and how the local congregations do their work. Therefore, a clear and indicative strategic plan for short and long terms is necessary for their growth. In addition to this they have to be visionary congregations that look ahead to know what is going on in the world, in the country they are operating in and in their surroundings. Knowing ahead of time what is going on will help the local congregations to prepare themselves to cope with the situation they will be facing.
12. Holistic approach/ministries are facilitators for the work of evangelism of the local congregations. They can make use of this ministry to penetrate areas, such as predominantly Muslim, that are closed to the gospel. Therefore, local congregations have to make use of the holistic approach to enhance their ministries.
13. Members' devotion to the ministry of the local congregations in terms of sacrificing their time, money, knowledge, skill and talent will bring continuous growth for the local congregations.
14. Local congregations that are self-supporting in financial aspects have a power to withstand some of the challenges they face in their ministries, and will continue growing and reach out to the un-reached groups. Developing financial capacity of local congregations is decisive for their growth; therefore, leaders must focus on how to develop the financial capacity of their congregations.
15. Developing/organizing the Church within a church or home cells is the best and easy way to expand and grow. It is also the best way to

handle, to know and to nurture members of the local congregations. Therefore, local congregations that want to grow have to develop several home cells depending on their membership.

16. Bible study is the main tool for the local congregations to empower and strengthen the faith of their members so that they can withstand persecutions, if they encounter it. Therefore, they have to maximize Bible study groups as much possible and know that also all their members are participating in one of the groups.



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## 2. Theses

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## 3. Internet Sources

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#### **4. Oral Interviews**

Rev. Shiferaw Feleke 20/09/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Ato Biratu Deressa 25/09/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Dr. Kebede Mulatu 26/09/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Ato Eyasu Tagicho 29/09/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Ato Mitiku Mengistu 03/10/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Ato Demeke Hamesso 04/10/07, from South Central Ethiopia Synod, Awassa  
Ato Alemayehu Hanaga 05/10/07, from Tabor congregation, Awassa  
Rev. Simon Mocha 04/10/07, from South Central Ethiopia Synod, Awassa  
Ato Feleke Tibebe 15/10/07, from Addis Ababa congregation, Addis Ababa  
Rev. Markos Hadero 15/10/07, from Addis Ababa congregation, Addis Ababa  
Ato Agamo Adamo 29/10/07, from Wabe Batu Synod, Dodola  
Ato Temelsen Thomas 30/10/07, from Dodola congregation, Dodola  
Ato Negash Degefu 30/10/07, from Dodola congregation, Dodola  
Ato Roba Woticha 30/10/07, from Dodola congregation, Dodola  
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#### **5. Magazines and Booklets**

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Addis Ababa, No date  
NLM's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mission Work in Ethiopia, by Rev. Tibo Arsicha,  
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#### **6. Reports**

10<sup>th</sup> anniversary summary report of Tabor congregation

Report presented to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting of the Central Ethiopia Synod,  
Nov. 30- Dec. 1, 2007

Summary report about the brief history of the establishment of Central  
Ethiopia Synod, April 2008

## **Interview Guide**

### **A/ Interview Questions to the three congregations' leaders and members**

1. How long have you been a member of this congregation? And what is your responsibility in this congregation?
2. Would you tell me how this congregation came into being? Who were the founders? Why was it established?
3. How many members, Pastors and Evangelists do you have in this congregation?
4. What kind of ministries and services this congregation has been giving thus far? What these ministries and services have contributed for her growth?
5. Would you tell me some of the main factors that contributed for the growth of this congregation?
6. What kind of holistic ministries and services do you have in your congregation? How do you evaluate the benefit of having these ministries and services for the growth of your congregation and beyond for other local congregations as a whole?
7. How do you reach out to non-believers? Do you have any outreach work in relation to this? If so, how many are they and where are you working?
8. Do you have encountered challenges in your ministry both in the town as well as in the outreach areas? What kind of challenges? How do you solve them?
9. How do you nurture and empower your members?
10. Can you tell me some of the hindrances for the growth of local congregation from your experiences and in general also?
11. Do you have any recommendation that may help this congregation grow more and more in advancing the kingdom of God until the return of the Lord Jesus?
12. How your congregation has been surviving and growing being in the midst of predominantly Muslim? What kind of challenges you have

encountered from them so far? A Specific question to Dodola congregation only.

**B/ Interview Questions to the Synod leaders**

1. How long have you been serving in this Synod? Can you tell me how this Synod was established? Who commenced the work? How was it developed and grew?
2. Would you tell me what services your Synod has been giving?
3. How many parishes, congregations, members, Pastors and Evangelists does this Synod have in general?
4. What are the reasons for the growth of the congregations in your Synod and what are the hindrances, if any?