

MORE ABOUT FAMILY MINISTRY

Christian Family Ministry is bringing hope to Africa which is suffering an AIDS pandemic. Educational work always takes time, but it is worth doing. The Churches could well share their experiences and put in practice each other's findings and working methods.



Session at a Training of Trainers' course

The aim of EECMY Family Life Education Program is to help Church people to live in happy marriages and families. The happier the married lives are, the better service they can give in their respective duties.

Finally, the goal of the Program is to have Christian Family Life Education as an essential part of ordinary teaching in all levels of Church work.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Family ministry as a program is new in the Church. All the possible resources would be welcomed to strengthen this work. Please, pray for Family ministry and support it in different ways, let it be practical assistance or financial support. Let us join hands and serve the Lord together in this field!

(Updated June 2006)

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**The Ethiopian
Evangelical Church
Mekane Yesus**



FAMILY MINISTRY

**Family Life Education
Program (FLEP)**

2006

BACKGROUND

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is a rapidly growing African Church. The membership figure (20,000 in 1959 when the Church was founded) reached 4,3 million in 2005. The Church has strongly focused on evangelism, always reaching out to new people. But experiencing rapid growth, the Church is also challenged to nurture those who are already members. One field which has clearly been forgotten during previous years is taking care of the welfare of marriages and families.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PROGRAM

In 2000, the Mekane Yesus Church called Sr. Anna-Kaarina Palmu and Rev. Matti Palmu, missionaries of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), to develop the Church's work in the fields of Marriage and Family. They had been serving the Church in the years 1974-1993. As of September 2004 an Ethiopian couple, W/ro Aberash Tolessa and Rev. Geneti Wayessa started their work as counterparts to the Palmus; during Palmus' furlough 2005-2006 they were running the whole program. FELM is financing the Program through an earmarked grant (in 2000-2005 roughly 10-17,000 Euros / year). The running budget includes travel, cost of courses and other expenses (and starting 2004 also salaries of the counterparts).

FOUNDATION, AIMS AND GOALS

The EECMY Family Life Education Program is based on the Bible teaching.

Some of **the aims of the Program** are:

- to explain the Biblical and Theological Foundation of the Church's Family Ministry;
- to raise awareness amongst the leadership on the necessity of Family Ministry;
- to train Church personnel for Family Ministry;
- to arrange Marriage courses, Retreats etc.;
- to collect and create materials for Family Ministry.

The goal of the Program is to train as many instructors (couples) as possible. They are to act as Family Ministry teachers, too, while working in their respective duties. An Ethiopian couple is coordinating Family Ministry in the EECMY Central Office.

TARGET AREA: THE WHOLE CHURCH

The target areas of the Family Life Education Program are all the 20 Church Units (19 Synods and 1 Work Area), 4 theological seminaries and all the Bible schools. Also the government-run schools could be a target group in the future. There could be many other additional target groups. When talking about expanding the work the crucial point is the training of local instructors.



Group work during Training of Trainers' course

During 2000-2005 the Program has **arranged a Basic Marriage Course in all 20 Church Units**, and the Central Office. All students at the EECMY Theological Seminaries are getting a Family Ministry course (about 30 periods, two credit hours) during their studies.

The Training of Trainers (TOT) courses for Family Ministry are given in order to get Ethiopian couples as instructors for basic level teaching. By June 2006 there were around 270 people who have completed the Family Ministry TOT course. After their training they have arranged teaching, not only at Synod level, but also at Parish and Congregation levels, in local languages.

THE VISION OF THE EECMY FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAM :

- to support Church members to live in happy and healthy marriages and families;
- to encourage Church workers who are happy in their marriages to spread the Good News through their life example and teaching;
- to improve the status of girls and women through strengthening the Christian family model;
- to help in the frightening situation of the AIDS pandemic through stressing the significance of faithfulness in the life of couples and families.

WHAT IS "FAMILY MINISTRY"?

In an Ethiopian society it is common to think that everybody gets married sooner or later. The idea of single adults is strange here. This is why Family Ministry in this context is always thought to be related to marriage in one way or another. It is also good to remember that in Ethiopia "family" normally means the extended family, which is much larger unit than the nuclear family of western countries.

Teaching on marriage and various family related issues is **needed for a large variety of target groups:** youth (who basically will all get married, the only question is when), engaged couples, newly married couples, couples of different ages, parents, grandparents (out of whom many might be widows). One other target group is workers in the different fields of education, child raising, health etc, in addition to the Church workers.

"Family Life Education" includes many different features of Church work as a whole. It covers "preventive" education in the sense of teaching or instructing, but it is also related to the "curative" field of Counselling, whether pre-marital or marriage counselling. Thus **"Family Ministry"** is an appropriate overall title for this field of work.