

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' Refresher course

The aim of EECMY Family Ministry (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 Family Ministry as an essential part of ordinary teaching and service in all levels of Church work.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Family Ministry as a program is fairly new in the Church, all possible resources are welcome to strengthen it. Please, pray for Family Ministry and support it in different ways, let it be practical assistance or any other support. Let us join hands serving the Lord together in this field!

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FAMILY MINISTRY

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**The Ethiopian
Evangelical Church
Mekane Yesus**



FAMILY MINISTRY

**Family Life Education
Program (FLEP)**

2009

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) is more than five million when the Church is celebrating her 50th Anniversary (Jubilee) in 2009. The Church has strongly focused on evangelism, reaching out to new people. But experiencing growth, the Church is also challenged to nurture those already members. Field which has clearly been forgotten during previous years is taking care of the welfare of marriages and families.

THE GROWING FAMILY MINISTRY

Since 2000 the EECMY runs a specific program for Family Ministry, now part of Department of Mission and Theology (DMT). The **five main sectors of Family Ministry** are: 1) Pre-marital teaching, 2) Programmes for married couples, 3) Teaching various target groups on marriage and family life, 4) Marriage and family counselling and 5) Training for Family Ministry.

The Family Ministry Staff at Central Office are Rev. Geneti Wayessa (the Co-ordinator), Mrs. Aberash Tolessa with an advising missionary couple. Sr. Anna-Kaarina Palmu and Rev. Matti Palmu are sent by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM), which has been supporting the program from the very beginning. The Pre-Marital teaching is arranged in the Synods in Western Ethiopia by Sr. Helena Räisänen and Mr. Tapio Räisänen, who are sent by the Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM).

FOUNDATION, AIMS AND GOALS

The EECMY Family Ministry is **based on the Bible**.

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

- to raise awareness amongst the leadership on the necessity of Family Ministry;
- to train Church personnel for Family Ministry;
- to arrange Family related courses, Retreats etc.;
- strengthen the structure for Marriage and Family Counselling activities;
- to collect and create materials for Family Ministry.

The goal of the Program is to train as many instructors or couples as possible to act as Family Ministry teachers while working in their respective duties.

TARGET AREA: THE WHOLE CHURCH

The target areas of the Family Ministry are all the Church Units (20 Synods and the new Work Areas), 4 theological seminaries and all (more than 30) Bible schools. There are many other potential target groups, like the government-run schools. The crucial point in expanding the activities is the training of local instructors.



As part of training, practising how to teach young people

In the first years the Program **arranged a Basic Marriage Course in all Church Units**, and the Central Office. All students at the EECMY Theological Seminaries are getting a Basics of Family Ministry course during their studies.

The **Training of Trainers (TOT) courses for Family Ministry** are given in order to get local couples as instructors for basic (congregation) level teaching. By August 2008 there were 374 people who have completed the Family Ministry TOT course. They have arranged teaching, also at Parish and Congregation levels, in local languages. Out of those, the program has trained 34 trainers, who will run Training of Trainers' Courses in all Synods. The goal is to have one instructor (couple) for each group of 10 congregations.—The training for Marriage and Family Counselors as well as trainers for Youth was started in 2008.

THE VISION OF THE FAMILY MINISTRY:

- to build up a healthy congregation and community growing from a healthy marriage and family;
- 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;
- on the field of Pre-marital teaching, to give Biblical education concerning sexual behaviour, i.e. abstinence before and faithfulness in marriage; and
- to strengthen the congregational structure for Marriage and Family Counseling activities.

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 new. Thus Family Ministry in this context is normally related to marriage. In Ethiopia "family" often means the extended family, which is much larger unit than the nucleus family of western countries.

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

"Family Life Education" includes many different features of Church work. It covers "preventive" education, but it is also related to the "curative" field of Counseling, whether pre-marital or marriage counselling. **"Family Ministry"** well describes the variety of work.