

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Hossana Mekane Yesus Seminary

Christian Family Life Education Program

ANNUAL REPORT OF YEAR 2001

(THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PROGRAM)



Couple Discussion during Marriage Course in South Ethiopia
Synod (SES), Hagera Mariam, in February, 2001

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
Hossana Mekane Yesus Seminary (HMYS)

Christian Family Life Education Program (FLEP)

FLEP REPORT 2001

Background

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus has grown rapidly. Many activities have been started based on the needs of the widening Church work.

The Church has taught the basics of faith for adult members, women, youth and children. However, not so much has been done on the field of Christian Family Ministry including parenting, family relations, couple communication, marriage counselling etc.

Family is the foundation of the society. A congregation starts from a family. Christian families are the basic units of the church. The church is an assembly of family members.

If the church members are happy in their marriages and families they are free to worship in their congregations. Likewise, joyful and healthy marriage/family life benefits their service in the Church. Vice versa, troubled marriage/family life affects their worship and service, too.

The EECMY has continued to grow rapidly. Many of the new (and previous) members come with various questions of family relations, some even with acute problems. Still most of the pastors and evangelists of the church do not have either the knowledge or experience in Christian Family Ministry to help these members.

The EECMY started in the beginning of the year 2000 a special program in order to strengthen Family Ministry.

Start of program 2000

The Church called through the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) a Missionary Couple (Sr. Anna-Kaarina and Rev. Matti Palmu) to start the Family Ministry work. They had been serving the Church in different positions during 1974-93 in South Central Synod and later on in the Central Office. They have special training on Family Ministry including Couple Communication. In addition to this Sr. Anna-Kaarina Palmu is a trained Job Counsellor.

Due to difficulties with work permits for Addis Abeba it was decided to start the Family Ministry work under the framework of the Hossana Mekane Yesus Seminary (HMYS). The FLEP Budget (ETB 107.000 for the year 2000 and ETB 80.000 for 2001) has been granted by the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM).

Acceptance of the new program in various Church Units

The first two years of function have clearly shown that there is a big need for teaching and training additional teachers for various fields of Family Ministry on different levels of Church work.

FLEP ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR 2001

- If not otherwise mentioned, Sr. Anna-Kaarina Palmu and Rev. Matti Palmu have been together the facilitators, working and teaching as a couple.
- The teaching method has been participatory, there has been not much of lecturing.
- See also the summary list of FLEP Courses 2001 (Appendix)

A. TEACHING AT THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE EECMY

- 1. March 9-10 Teaching on Marriage at the Nekemt Christian Education College (NCEC), Diploma Classes** in Synod Centre, Nekemt:
 - General teaching on Marriage; questions and answers.
 - 1st and 2nd year Diploma in Theology course, 22 students
 - Altogether 8 periods in two mornings. The course language: English.
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- 2. March 12 Teaching on Marriage at the Nekemt Christian Education College (NCEC) 2nd year Bible School** in Synod Centre, Nekemt:
 - General teaching on Marriage; several questions and answers.
 - 2nd year Bible School course, 22 students
 - Altogether 6 periods. The course language: Amharic.
- 3. May 7-8 Teaching on Marriage at the HMYS Ordination Course** at the Seminary:
 - General teaching on Marriage; many questions and answers.
 - 22 students (one from SWS, others from SCS)
 - Altogether 15 periods. The course language: Amharic.
- 4. May 10-11 Teaching on Marriage at the HMYS Gimbichu Bible School (GBS)** in Gimbichu:
 - General teaching on Marriage; many questions and answers.
 - 25 students (incl. one BS teacher);
 - Altogether 14 periods. The course language: Amharic.
- 5. November 26-30 Teaching in Addis Abeba at the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (MYTS), Section of Pastoralia, the Intensive Course on Family Ministry.**
 - The Course was part of the Course **Pastoral Care III**
 - Participants: 4th year Degree-students (19);
 - Teaching material: The students had previously studied the books a) Taylor, Tend My Sheep; b) Eide, Pastoral Care in an African Village. The new Reading assignment was Leonard's "Family Ministry".
 - Writing assignments: "Marriage Customs and Attitudes".
 - The course was given as an **intensive course** (all the five daily class periods and various assignments) during Block B five days.
 - Course Schedule: Pastoral Care III course is normally a 4 periods per week -course. During this Intensive Course there were 5 working days, altogether $5 \times 5 = 25$ periods.
 - There was much and active discussion on the questions brought up by the students and the teachers; The teaching method was participatory, there was not much of lecturing.
 - The Course was actually too short in order to cover the large material on Family Ministry.

B. TEACHING MARRIED COUPLES' COURSES IN THE EECMY SYNODS

- The Synods have invited pastors, evangelists and other leaders to courses on the condition they come together with their wives. The emphasis has been on Marriage Enrichment, but the intention is also to encourage participants to teach similar issues in their work/home areas. The FLEP has paid the food and lodging, the sending bodies have covered the costs related to participants' travels.
- The course language was Amharic (except English in Gambella-West)
- Course Topics: "Foundation of Marriage", "What do I expect of Marriage?", "Youth and Marriage Preparations", "Speaking and Listening", "How are the decisions made?", "Feelings", "Daily life in Marriage; Courtesies", "How could the men/women show their love to each other?", "Woman in Marriage", "Man in Marriage", "Problems of Marriage", "Gospel Servant's Family Life".
- There were a variety of group discussions: man and wife only, groups of couples, women's group & men's group and then many general discussions.
- The Topics of Bible Studies were: The Marriages of 1) Adam & Eve, 2) Mary & Joseph, 3) Jacob & Leah and 4) Priscilla & Aquila.
- The local participation in teaching: Morning prayers by different participants;
- The Holy Communion Service concluded the Marriage Course Programs.

1. February 6-9 Church Workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in SCES, Awasa

- Program from Tuesday 9 a.m. until Friday 8.00 p.m.
- Participants: **14 couples**, 12 Pastors, 2 other Church Workers with their wives.
- Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Sidama Culture";
- The last night's Dinner Party was remarkable with superior selection of local dishes, served in the park in front of the Synod Office; the Synod leadership was participating.

2. Feb. 13-16. Church Workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in SES, Hagere Mariam

- Program from Tuesday 9.20 a.m. until Friday 6.30 p.m.
- There were only **10 couples**, 6 Pastors and 4 other Church Workers with their wives
- The Synod Evangelism Department did actually not at all take care of the course. The number of participants was unnecessarily low, while many would have been interested in participating, but were not invited.
- Lectures on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Guji-Oromo Culture" and "Marriage in Borana-Oromo Culture";

3. Mar 13-16. Pastors' and their Wives' Marriage Course in CS, Nekemt

- Program from Tuesday 8.50 a.m. until Friday 7.30 p.m.
- Participants: **16 couples** (pastors' couples only).
- All food, coffee etc was served in CS "Tea House" in Synod Centre by the Womens' Work Department of CS. - good arrangement!
- Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Oromo Culture";
- The book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to all participating couples.

4. Apr. 2-5 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in SCS, Hossana

- Program from Monday 8.45 a.m. until Thursday 6.25 p.m.
- Participants: **25 couples** (19 pastors and 6 other Church workers with their spouses); the up to now biggest group on Couples' Courses - actually too big group!
- Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Kambaata & Hadiyya Culture";
- The book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to all participating couples.
- An extraordinary feature on this course was that many of the Synod top leaders were participating: The President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Directors of Evangelism and Finance Departments, Secretaries for Evangelism, Outreach and Womens' Work, all five District Leaders, all five District Evangelism Secretaries, three teachers of HMYS, etc.

5. Apr. 23-28 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in SEAW, Dodola

- Program from Tuesday 8.25 a.m. until Friday 7 p.m.
- Participants: **18 couples** (2 pastors and 16 other Church workers with their spouses).
- Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Arsi Oromo Culture" and "Marriage in Bale Oromo Culture";
- The book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to all participating couples.

6. Oct 14-17 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in EGBS, Gambella (East)

- Program from Monday 8.20 a.m. until Wednesday 8.10 p.m.
- Participants: **12 couples** (5 pastors and 7 other Church workers with their spouses) and the Womens' Work Secretary of EGBS, i.e. 23 participants. - The Mezenger participants were not able to come.
- The last day's Supper was a Feast Supper arranged by the Synod for all the Course Participants;
- The teaching was given in Amharic and translated to Annuak language; this was the very first Marriage Course held using interpretation; it is clear that it would be much better and more natural if this type of course would be given using only one language;
- Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Annuak Culture";
- The book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to all participating couples;
- This course was shorter than most similar courses due to fact that we could have only three (3) full days;
- The Reporter of Radio Ethiopia was an observer during most sessions, and he also transmitted daily a summary of our Course Outcome; the response from Government Officials had been astonishing: "Why haven't you invited us to the Course!?! Next time please let us participate, too!"
- The Music, especially the singing with several drums, made this course an extraordinary experience! Also it is to be mentioned that the hot climate (maximum temperature +35 during the course periods inside) had an impact on the course, at least from teachers' side!

7. **Oct 17-20 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in WGBS, Gambella (West)**
 - Program from Thursday 8.20 a.m. until Saturday 6 p.m.
 - Participants: **21 couples** (15 pastors and 6 other Church workers with their spouses) and the Evang. Secretary (pastor), i.e. 43 participants.
 - The Synod President & his wife were participating the whole time!
 - The teaching was given in English and translated to Nuer language; this was the second Marriage Course held using interpretation; it would be better if this type of course could be given using only one language;
 - Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: A thorough (20 pages!) presentation on "Marriage in Nuer Culture";
 - Some copies of the book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to the Synod and Baro Bible School;
 - This course was shorter than most similar courses due to fact that we could have only three (3) full days;

8. **November 5-9 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in SS, Dilla**
 - Program from Tuesday 8.30 a.m. until Friday 6.50 p.m.
 - Participants: **20 couples** (10 pastors and 10 other Church workers with their spouses).
 - Lecture on the local Marriage Culture: "Marriage in Gedeo Culture";
 - The book "Ye Tedar Mistir" (The Secret of Marriage, by Dr. Alemu Beeftu) was given to all participating couples.

9. **December 11-14 Church workers' and their Wives' Marriage Course in NCES, Dessie**

C. TEACHING OTHER COURSES

1. **March 30 - April 1 Marriage Enrichment Retreat** for Finnish Missionaries Bishoftu/Babogaya, Debre Zeit
 - Program from Friday 6.40 p.m. until Sunday 1 p.m. in Finnish.
 - Topics: "Talking and Listening", "Anger" and "Chances of our Relationship". - The participants: Six Finnish Missionary Couples.
 - The Family Communion Service concluded the Course on Sunday.

D. OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. **January 21-28** observing at the **EECMY 16th General Assembly** in Mekanissa; during the breaks meeting the leaders of Church Units for future FLEP Courses' arrangements

2. During their **Furlough in Finland in June - September** the Advisors
 - a) **visited the five Sending Congregations**, which are supporting the work of EECMY and Palmus through FELM; b) were teaching at a **Marriage Course leading a Group of Missionary Couples**; c) participated in preparing and facilitating **Consultation on FELM Family Ministry** at FELM Central Office in Helsinki, Finland. The Consultation was paving the way for spreading the concept of Family Ministry in various FELM Working Areas in various continents. d) Sr. Anna-Kaarina got additional **training for Job Counsellors** at the ELCF Central Office, Helsinki.

3. On their way back from Finland the Advisors spent couple of days in Kenya visiting various **Book Shops in Nairobi** purchasing Family Ministry books for FLEP. They also **visited Daystar University** in Nairobi in order to get information on Training for Family Ministry.
4. **October 10-13** the Advisors were at or around the **EECMY Executive Committee Meeting** at the Central Office in Addis Abeba. During the meeting breaks some detailed course-appointments were made and plans agreed on the forthcoming Marriage Courses. Also there were general discussions on FLEP Activities with various representatives of the Church Units.
5. The Advisors have been **preparing the course materials, collecting different materials and literature** for the growing FLEP Library.
6. One of the main objectives of the FLEP is "to **search for Key Persons to promote the Family Life Ministry in the EECMY**". Different Courses held in the Synods and training institutions help in finding interested and capable persons or couples. The Advisors have also used various opportunities in order to raise awareness for the need of Family Ministry in Church and Society.

E. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF FLEP

The feedback from the Synods and Theological Institutions has been very positive and encouraging. There is a great need for focusing in Family Ministry in EECMY.

The FLEP Advisors plan to start during 2002 and soon expand the Training of Trainers' Courses. This seems to be the only way to fulfil the tremendous challenge in strengthening the Family Ministry of the Church. - Prior to actual Training of Trainers' Workshops teaching material (Trainers' Handbook etc) has to be prepared.

In the long run the aim is to have Christian Family Life Education as an essential part of ordinary teaching in all the Church Units.

We are grateful to our Lord and further on to EECMY and FELM for the opportunity to continue on this field of service.

Respectfully submitted,
December 4, 2001

Sr. Anna-Kaarina Palmu
FLEP Advisor

Rev. Matti Palmu
FLEP Advisor

Appendixes:

1. Program Description of FLEP
2. Summary list of FLEP Courses during 2001
3. Daily Program of a Marriage Course in a Synod