

Addis Ababa Bible Training Institute

Report

Moving Musings



The title above is intended to stimulate questions and even confusion. Moving is a word that engenders many different considerations. From one place to another. Emotional change. Progress. Or the opposite thereof. The physical circumstances around all of us on the campus of the Mekanisa School for the Deaf and the AABTI stimulate various thoughts for each of us. The picture to the left of this text is of the sidewalk/former wall on the street side of our property. As you can see things are changing.

Addis Ababa, the city, and Ethiopia, the country are changing. Of course, current world events embody some of the concerns and even chaos that suggest change on the surface of this earth, God's Creation. For humans, change is part of the human condition.

Last night, Deborah and I were returning from an enjoyable evening out at the home of one of our Ethiopian Brethren. We were riding with Behailu Abebe and his wife Alem in their vehicle. We came back well after dark in an area that used to be on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. It in no way can be considered "on the outskirts" anymore. The level of human activity and "living" going on was shocking to us. Deborah's comment was "moving, moving, moving." That's exactly what was going on all around us. It is a very far cry from our experiences of 30 years ago here in Addis Ababa and Ethiopia in general.

Progress, though, has a price. It is often one rarely considered by those who benefit from progress. What has happened to all the "disadvantaged, dispirited, and disabled" that used to live up against that now destroyed wall. What of the myriad shopkeepers whose shops have been demolished to make room for this progress. What of the offices, clinics, storage areas, etc. on our compound that had to be demolished for this progress? These musings are not meant to criticize this "progress." They are meant, though, to help me, and all of us, consider what "progress" sometimes means.

For the country of Ethiopia, progress means increased economic growth. It means the possibility of improving the living standards of many Ethiopians. It means the migration of rural youth to the cities to possibly participate sooner in

this “progress.” It also means dramatic cultural shifts within Ethiopian society. This includes a common effect of “Western” culture, that is, attention directed more toward “things” than the purposes of God. It also means a decrease in “interest” in the Gospel. That is a shift that Deborah and I have seen, from the amazing attention of the rural population of the Sidamo region to the Gospel message in the late ‘90’s, to a decreasing interest from the 2010’s and beyond. This is because of the “progress” even in the rural regions of Ethiopia – though nothing to the extent we are seeing here in Addis Ababa proper.



Sometimes, “moving” involves “removing,” as the excavator in the associated picture is “removing” the overburden to create a “basement” parking level for the building to be constructed to make up for the “demolished” buildings previously on the Mekanisa compound. More will be said about these changes through different avenues in the months and years ahead.

What is most needful for those of us emphasizing the training that is going on through the AABTI, is equipping this group of college graduates to be better equipped and motivated to minister to the needs of an increasingly young and urbanized populous. The evangelistic work that has been ongoing for some 60 years has been quite successful in rural areas. The need is an increased emphasis on urban evangelism and ministry without neglecting the rural works that have been successful. Pray that we make needed progress toward this goal.

Also pray for the urban poor being displaced from long-established “places” (on sidewalks and up against walls) for sleep and access to the public willing to respond to their plights through small “donations” that make some semblance of “survival” possible for them. Also pray for the government to be aware of these folks and their needs. I suspect they are making efforts to help but at present those efforts appear opaque to me. Pray for those of us who see these needs to have the heart, wisdom, and motivation to help in this time of “transition” in a society “moving” that was not at all envisioned just a few decades ago.

Blessings to all,

Jim and Deborah Wilson and the students of the AABTI