



EthioFaith USA: Developing Christian Special Education for Ethiopia

NEWSLETTER WINTER, 2017

INCREDIBLE PROGRESS!

Great progress is being made for the establishment of Faith School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Progress is evident in many areas.

First, fundraising goals are being met. Because of reconstruction costs and gaining necessary school furniture and supplies, the start-up costs of the 1st year are greater than what the ongoing costs will be for each year thereafter. We are currently 80% toward the fall, 2017 goal of \$30,000. Thanks to our many contributors!

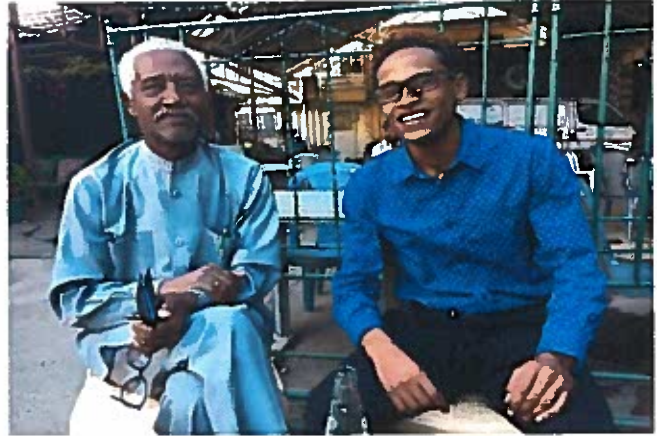
Second, I (Getenet) made a trip to Addis Ababa at the beginning of January. I was able to make arrangements with a contractor for the reconstruction of our family home that will begin later this spring (pictured below).

In addition, I began the process of seeking government permits. The first permit—related to land use—is nearly completed. The second, a permit to operate the school, cannot be received until after reconstruction of the school building.



In addition, I was able to meet with community leaders, as we continue to take steps toward forming a board over oversight in Ethiopia. Pictured below is Dr. Teketel Forssido, former Ethiopian ambassador to

Russia and recently retired president of Hope University College.



Finally, I was able to visit a teacher, pictured below, who is pioneering vocational programming for older children and adolescents with special needs.



Our plans for Faith School, since we will begin with younger children, will connect nicely to this trail-blazing teacher.

MLive, the parent company of the Grand Rapids Press, covered the story of the emerging Faith School in both print and digital editions. The digital edition received over 1,800 shares! The story and pictures follow on the next pages.

College student starts school for disabled in Ethiopia



By [Jan Holst | iholst@mlive.com](mailto:iholst@mlive.com)

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Adoptive brothers Getenet and Paul Timmermans enjoy a card game at their parents' Grand Rapids Township home. *Jan Holst*

Getenet Timmermans, 21, is only a junior in college, but he has started a school for disadvantaged children in Ethiopia.

Orphaned at an early age, the young man was adopted in his early teens and says that he knows "it takes many to accomplish something good."

He recalls the time when his older sister was keeping the family together in a small house located near the city orphanage in Ethiopia. A visitor from the United States who had come to adopt a child, paid to help his family get a bed and a few sparse furnishings.

When the same visitor returned seven years later, Getenet spoke up. "I couldn't speak much English, but I slept in that bed and knew it was a symbol of God's faithfulness," he said. "I told him that we couldn't stay in Ethiopia. We were getting too old for the schools. I knew it was my only shot."

His passionate plea did not fall on deaf ears. An informal request was sent out to friends and fellow church members and in 2010, 15-year-old Getenet and his 11-year-old brother Fekadu came to live with Steve and Barbara Timmermans, who were then living in Chicago and now reside in Grand Rapids Township.

Getenet was drawn to helping those with disabilities before coming to the United States, but after getting to know his newly adopted brother Paul, who has Down syndrome, he was overwhelmed with the desire to do something for those with mental differences in his homeland.

So "amazed" by how Paul was included in the family and by how much he was able to do, Getenet volunteered at Elim Christian Services, which serves those with intellectual disabilities in the Chicago area.

He couldn't stop thinking about the contrast to the attitudes of his homeland. "There they push them away," he said. "The sad thing is that the community and the society don't involve these people in any social activities. Parents hide their disabled children at home."



Getenet Timmermans has always had a heart for persons with disabilities. He is shown here with a friend in Ethiopia.

While Getenet's heart has had strong feelings about disabled children in his homeland, the actual idea to start a school came as a result of a class he took that was taught by a visiting professor.

The math/physics major at Trinity Christian College had little interest in taking the "Beyond Suffering" class offered by Karen Roberts for the interim, or class between semesters.

"It just was what was available and only a two-week class, so I took it," he said. The stories told about kids with intellectual disabilities and struggles faced by their families turned his thoughts to Ethiopia.

"All of what she said was true. The community pushed these kids away, and I also was one of the community people who pushed them away. I felt so bad and wished I could go back and relive those years."

A trip to his homeland made him realize how few resources for children with intellectual disabilities there were.

The idea is to help those with intellectual disabilities in Ethiopia so they can achieve and then set a good example and, in turn, teach the community.

"My brother Paul has set a good example to many others and to me," he said. "He always impresses me. The Ethiopian people will change through education too."

Faith School is designed to accomplish those goals - a few children at a time. It will be run by a board of directors here in the United States and one in the country in which he was born.

Already established is a local non-profit organization that is raising funds to support facility rehabilitation, purchase supplies and support a staff. This January, between semesters, Getenet traveled to Ethiopia to set up a similar charity there to oversee his project.

Just having people know about his efforts is "an encouragement" to Getenet. He said that he also appreciates prayers for the project. Financial support can be done online at www.ethiofaith.org.