



**MCEC**

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June 26, 2024

Dear Friends of Meserete Kristos Seminary,

Mark 4:39 reads: "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." President Desalegn Abebe presented the challenge to follow Jesus in the storms of life as part of his address to the most recent graduating class of Meserete Kristos Seminary.

***Your support made this graduation possible!  
Thank you for supporting student scholarships!***

***Thank you for the years of support that made development of the Debre Ziet campus a reality!***

In the attached newsletter, I invite you to celebrate with the graduating class at the main campus, but also make note of the wider impact of the Seminary in helping to administer 18 colleges spread throughout the country to meet the leadership needs of the fastest growing Anabaptist/Mennonite national church body in the world. Thanks be to God!

In August, I have the privilege of traveling to Ethiopia together with Doug Klassen, Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Canada, and my colleague Fanosie Legesse, MCEC Intercultural Mission Minister. We look forward to celebrating with Meserete Kristos Church as they gather for their annual meeting. Together we will celebrate our partnership in the gospel over these many years and continue the work of strengthening of church-to-church relationship as we grow together into a hopeful future.

Thank you again for your ongoing support. I covet your prayers for the Seminary, for Meserete Kristos Church as they gather in August, and for peace in the beautiful land of Ethiopia.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norm Dyck".

Norm Dyck  
Mission Minister

## MK Seminary Newsletter: June 2024



God has done it again! Another successful graduation took place on Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at the Seminary in Bishoftu. A total of 84 graduates crossed the stage to begin another level of servant leadership. Nine were from the distance diploma program, eleven from the Amharic degree program in Addis Ababa, fifty-nine from the Bishoftu campus, and five from the AMBS Masters program. To date, 2,357 students have graduated from the MK Seminary.

After worship led by former student Yosef Kabeto, the graduation address was given by MKC President Desalegn Abebe. His text was Mark 4:35-41 where Jesus calms the storm. He challenged the graduates to apply what they learned when faced with challenges. "Theology is not enough," he said, "the disciples were happy with the teaching they received from Jesus but afraid in the practical circumstances." He encouraged them to remember that God's power is available in the storms of life, that challenges make us stronger, and that we need to know Jesus, not just about Jesus.

Principal Gishu Jebecha, began his commencement speech by highlighting the joy and pride of the occasion, and by thanking the families, churches, and friends who supported the graduates. He reminded everyone of the mission of the Seminary: "To equip men and women for the holistic transformation of the church and society." He, then, outlined the new programs which include a Bachelor of Arts in Mission and Intercultural Theology, Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies in English, and a Master of Arts in Practical Theology in Amharic.

It was also noted that the Seminary's influence reaches beyond the physical boundaries of the Bishoftu campus. Off-campus programs include various specialized short-term training programs, undergraduate studies offered at different Meserete Kristos Church regional offices, and capacity-building programs for those who cannot join regular campus programs.

In addition, the principal reported that the Seminary has established a brand-new educational department, which will offer new degrees: Bachelor of Arts in Leadership and Management, Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Development, and Master of Arts in Peace and Development.

Principal Gishu concluded by highlighting that these achievements would not have been possible without the firm support of generous donors, dedicated faculty members, and hardworking staff.

A special award was given to Mikias Dawit, a student from Eritrea, with the top academic performance, achieving a very great distinction, earning a G.P.A. of 3.93. A non-academic award for the student who provided exceptional service on behalf of the student body, went to Student President, Chefe Ensermu, who supported and served the student body through prayer coordination, chapel services, and advocacy on behalf of the students.

The service ended with more worship and a blessing from Principal Gishu Jebecha, "Congratulations Class of 2024! May your journey be blessed and may you continue to be an inspiration of hope and change." — Reported by Joanne DeJong

## *MATGA Graduates*

Dr. Drew Strait, a New Testament professor and the Program Director for the Master of Arts in Theology and Global Anabaptism (MATGA) degree program at AMBS, presented the five Masters students with their degrees.

Dr. Joe Liechty, a visiting Professor of Peace Studies at AMBS, presented each graduate with a small brass bell to symbolize the announcement that these graduates are entering their communities to bless and serve.

He shared that the ringing of a bell at the graduation of pastors and teachers on their Mennonite seminary campus in the U.S. has been a tradition since 1868. The little brass bells are replicas of the big one that now stands on the AMBS campus in Elkhart, Indiana.

Dr. Strait talked about the privilege of having a partnership with MK Seminary and presented copies of a special edition of the journal, *Anabaptist Witness*, to MKC President Desalegn Abebe and MKS Principal Gishu Jebecha. This issue is devoted to Mission and Peace in Ethiopia and is written exclusively by Ethiopian scholars and students in conversation with other Ethiopian scholars and practitioners.

Dr. Strait also presented the 2024 Excellence in Missionary Leadership Church award on behalf of the Ministry Department at AMBS, to Masters student Endaweke Balkew.



### **“Thanks be to God for his goodness and grace!”**

After a successful academic year and graduation ceremony, all the teachers and administrative staff met to praise and thank God for His faithfulness. Teacher Tekalegn Tekeste led the staff in worship and Principal Gishu Jebecha preached and thanked the staff for their tireless efforts, followed by a lunch. A surprise birthday cake for our beloved Registrar and Assistant Academic Dean, Elshaday Leulseged, seen on the left, was also a highlight of this program.

## *Academic Excellence*

Mikias Dawit grew up in Eritrea in a Christian home. He loved reading the Bible, and one night prayed, “Lord, if you are the Saviour, and if you love me, show me by reuniting me with my best friend.” Two days later, the friend came to him on his own initiative, and they were reunited. That was the day he committed his life to Christ.

Later he became a youth leader, but when his neighbours were put in prison for hosting the youth program, the youth attending the program knew they were under suspicion. Due to persecution, his family came to Ethiopia for safety and a better future.

After receiving a nursing degree at the Asmara College of Health Sciences, Mikias left Eritrea and joined his parents in Addis Ababa where his father had planted an Eritrean church.

One day, their family was blessed to re-connect with an old friend, Samson Afeworki, who challenged him to study theology. Samson arranged for the sponsorship of eight Eritreans to attend the Meserete Kristos College, including Mikias and his brother, Yosias. Mikias graduated as the top student with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Theology with an emphasis on pastoral mission. His brother also graduated with distinction.

Mikias shared how he was surprised by the huge cultural differences experienced by the group of Eritreans. Although language was one of the barriers, they were very happy with the social life on campus. Christians were looked down on at his old school, so the freedom to talk about Jesus was a blessing. Meeting people from different parts of the country and from different denominations widened his horizons.

Like most students, Mikias has been discerning next steps in his journey with Christ. He has arranged to move to Toronto, Canada, and hopes to pursue a master’s in theology. To God be the glory!



*Mikias receiving the award for academic excellence from the hand of Pastor Desalegn*

## *Alumnus Edits Journal*

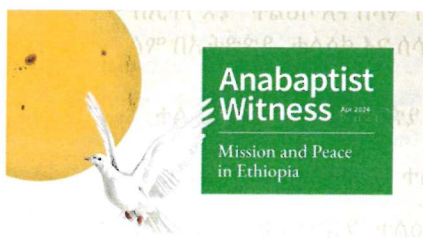
Henok T. Mekonin, an alumnus of MK College, 2014, and AMBS, 2021, now works with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary as a global leadership collaborative specialist. He, as guest editor and James R. Krabill as interim managing editor, have just released a special issue of the journal, *Anabaptist Witness*, which focuses on Mission and Peace in Ethiopia.

The articles in this issue are organized in two large sections. The first focuses on mission and peace efforts in the broader context of the Ethiopian nation, and a survey of publications promoting interfaith conversations between Ethiopian Orthodox and Evangelical Christians. The second section focuses more specifically on Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) history and perspectives and is subdivided into a section entitled "Missionary Influences and Voices" and a section on MKC peace and mission efforts. The issue editorial offers a broad overview of the Ethiopian context.

The editors hope that this collection of essays and book reviews would contribute to the sharing of gifts for mutual growth among Anabaptist/Mennonite churches across the globe. The issue will serve as a key resource as global Anabaptist communities prepare to attend the 2028 Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Ethiopia as part of the 500th commemoration of the origins of the Anabaptist movement.

As the editorial by Henok Mekonin and James Krabill reads: "All of us will be strengthened in our faith if we intentionally seek out the voices of sisters and brothers living out their faith in contexts different from our own."

The print edition of this issue is available for purchase on Amazon. Proceeds from the print edition will go toward supporting MKC programs. The free online version of the issue will be available in November 2024.



## *A Chance to Advance*



A special surprise was to see Eyerusalem Bikila, one of the staff at MKS cross the stage to receive her Distance Diploma in Biblical Studies.

Twenty-four years ago, Eyerusalem joined the kitchen staff as a happy young teenager. She gladly peeled potatoes and carrots for many years, then was promoted to work as storekeeper where she still meticulously keeps watch on all Seminary supplies.

Three years ago, Eyerusalem felt a desire to understand the Bible more clearly and deeply. She serves as part of the leadership team at her church and wants to use her new found knowledge to serve God better.

She is married to Kebede Asfaw who has also been working at MKS for twenty-four years, first as a watchman, and for the past decade in the maintenance department. As youths, they met at the college, fell in love at the college, married there, and have worked there ever since. They are raising four lovely children. God is great!

Meserete Kristos College Burayu Welmara, one of the 18 colleges under the supervision of Meserete Kristos Seminary, hosted ministers from MKC congregations and conferred degrees upon 64 students and diplomas upon 13, thus totaling 77 graduates on May 25, 2024.

## Mixed-use Commercial Building

The Board of Trustees and the administration are concerned about long-range income generation and financial sustainability. A plan to build a larger guest house to generate income was put forward a year ago. More research and learning from other non-profit institutions has led them to enlarge their planning.

Based upon what they have learned, they are now promoting the latest plan, a mixed-use commercial building constructed on the empty space facing the road between the gate and the administrator's residence.

The MK Seminary has outlined its long-term objectives to develop a 2B+G+10 mixed-use commercial building. The objective is to construct and develop mixed-use commercial building integrating guesthouses, commercial spaces, offices, and entertainment venues, providing diverse services to customers. It is also to engage in trade and other legitimate business operations that yield a respectable return on investment.

This construction project will be executed in two distinct stages. The initial phase encompasses the construction of a 2B+G+5 structure spanning 6441.1 square meters, followed by the addition of 5 floors covering 9424.74 square meters. The completion of the subsequent phase of construction is scheduled to include these additional floors. The project's investments will encompass the construction of the building, the procurement of furniture and equipment, as well as

pre-operating expenses. The architect's estimation indicates a total investment of \$6,731,957 for the whole larger 2B+G+10 structure or \$4,600,785 for the smaller 2B+G+5 structure. With only \$188,000 currently available in the building fund, the financing of this project will be an interesting challenge.

In the pursuit of creating a vibrant mixed-use commercial building, *soil testing is underway* at the site. This crucial step ensures that the foundation and construction method align with the site's unique soil composition. By understanding the soil characteristics, the architect can optimize the design, stability, and sustainability of the project.



Soil testing

### Please designate your gift to:

"MK Seminary Scholarships", "MK Seminary Building Fund", or "MK Seminary as Needed".

We are happy to provide tax-deductible receipts.

Write your check to ....

"MK College Link" and send to MK College Link, Box 1701, Harrisonburg, VA 22803, USA

Or "Mennonite Church Eastern Canada", and send to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, attn: Meserete Kristos College, 201-50 Kent Ave. Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 Canada (Or, if you prefer, you may send your gift to your Regional Church office)

Or "Northwest Mennonite Conference", and send to Northwest Mennonite Conference attn: Meserete Kristos College, Box 1316, Didsbury, AB T0M 0W0, Canada

Or wire funds directly to: Bank of Abyssinia, Bole Branch, Addis Ababa, SWIFT Code: ABYSETAA, to Meserete Kristos College Account # 31976. Notify Gishu Jebecha by separate communication at gishuj@yahoo.com.



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