

Ethiopia

SIM's work in Ethiopia includes involvement in theological education, evangelism, youth and children's ministries, HIV and AIDS ministries, and education.

This African country enjoys the rare distinction of never having been colonised. It is also the original home of the coffee tree, and today boasts some of the world's finest quality coffees. Ethiopia's rugged mountains and isolated river valleys make it one of the most breathtaking nations on the continent to visit. But even more beautiful than its landscapes are the people who call Ethiopia their home.

Current SIM Ministry

The entrance of SIM missionaries into Ethiopia in the 1920s is a story of miracles and heroism. When war erupted in Southern Ethiopia in 1937, the missionaries had to leave 75 newly baptised believers. But when the Italian army was driven out in 1941, the missionaries returned to find thousands of new believers. They recognised the great need for discipleship and training, but ninety percent of the converts were illiterate. This was the foundation of the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC), which today numbers more than 4,300,000 baptised believers in 5,017 congregations. They have their own mission school and missionary outreach, ministries to human needs and development projects, Bible schools, theological colleges, women's and children's work, urban ministries programme, and a literature publication centre.



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SIM missionary numbers were severely reduced during 1974-1991 when a Marxist government was in control. During that regime, Christians suffered persecution and martyrdom, but the church was strengthened and refined. The present government has granted religious freedom, which offers many opportunities for both SIM and EKHC to openly evangelise and disciple. The EKHC/SIM Memorandum of Agreement has brought the mission and the church into a renewed relationship of planning together. The EKHC continues to recognise the tremendous need for discipleship in the face of legalism and false doctrines and as it answers the call to foreign missions.

While still serving in church planting and church growth in the traditional south, SIM is finding new opportunities for ministry outreach in the north. Also, the war in Southern Sudan forced thousands of Sudanese across the border into camps in Ethiopia. SIM Ethiopia has worked closely with churches of the Sudan Interior Church (SIC) in two camps to train and disciple church leaders and to promote literacy and education, particularly as many believers begin to return to Southern Sudan and their former homes.

SIM's Partner Church



SIM's partner church, EKHC, which means 'Word of Life' in the Amharic language, grew out of the early missionary efforts. On its return to Ethiopia in 1945 following World War II, SIM found that the church in Ethiopia had grown and multiplied in their absence. The churches formed an association in 1956 called the Fellowship of Evangelical Believers together with believers from the Baptist General Conference mission efforts. In 1974 the congregations that relate to SIM formed their own denomination called the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC).

The EKHC embraces about 38 regional autonomous groups of churches that have formed along language and ethnic lines. About seven zones have been established that bring these autonomous groups into a closer relationship. These groups support a central office in Addis Ababa which assists them in fellowship, nurture and outreach and in representation to the government.

SIM participates with some EKHC theological education and ministry programmes, consisting of 127 Amharic Bible schools, two English diploma-level Bible colleges, and the degree-granting institution, the Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa.

History of Missions

The Jesuits arrived in Ethiopia in 1557 mainly to serve the resident Portuguese community. Through the patient process of teaching Scripture, crafts, and science, the Jesuits were able to eventually convert King Susenyos and the court to Roman Catholicism in 1622. But Catholicism was short-lived in Ethiopia. By 1632 civil war erupted, and all Catholic missionaries were expelled.

The first Protestant missionary to Ethiopia was Peter Heyling sent from the German Lutheran Church in 1633. He was an outstanding linguist and Amharic Bible teacher and impacted the Ethiopia Orthodox Church (EOC) for decades. Other early mission groups were The Church Missionary Society, Swedish Evangelical Mission, German Hermannsburg Mission, Norwegian Lutheran Mission, Danish Evangelical Mission, American Lutheran Mission and American Presbyterian Mission.

In more recent decades, other Protestant groups have also been involved in Ethiopia, including the Seventh-Day Adventists, Eastern Mennonite Board of Mission and Charities, Baptist General Conference of America, Bible Baptist Fellowship, Southern Baptists, and Finnish and Swedish Pentecostal groups.

In 1919 Dr. Thomas Lambie of the American Presbyterian Mission left Sudan and began medical work in Sayo in western Ethiopia. Within 10 years, a hospital and school were established and a thriving church came into being. In 1921 Dr. Lambie met Ras Teferi Mekonnen (later named King Haile Selassie) who urged Lambie to build a hospital in Addis Ababa. During Lambie's years in Addis Ababa, he became burdened for the large unreached populations of southern Ethiopia.

Because his own mission was unable to expand its resources, Dr. Lambie, together with George Rhoad and Alfred Buxton, formed an independent mission called the Abyssinian Frontiers Mission to reach the southern ethnic groups. Before leaving the US in 1927, these three pioneers met with Dr. Rowland Bingham, founder of Sudan Interior Mission, and mutually agreed to join forces through the aegis of SIM (now renamed Serving in

Mission).

Between 1927 and 1937, SIM opened 16 centres, mostly among animistic peoples in the south with broad holistic services primarily with schools and clinics. When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1937, all SIM missionaries were expelled, leaving behind about 75 baptised believers. Upon their return in 1942, SIM discovered that from this small beginning a movement had emerged, resulting in thousands of Christians and over 100 congregations.

The State Church

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was for centuries the official state church of Ethiopia and over 40% of the Ethiopian population claimed allegiance to it. The clergy had close ties with the government and was represented at its highest councils. The Marxist revolution of 1974, however, removed the church from this prominent position. It retains influence despite diminished power and land holdings.

Please pray for

- growth in understanding and interdependent co-operation between the EKHC and SIM. educational and human need ministries to effectively produce Christ-like living and Spirit-empowered service.
- EKHC evangelists to understand cross-cultural issues and effectively contextualise their message and ministry, both within Ethiopia and beyond. the HOPE for AIDS joint project between EKHC and SIM to bring help and healing to people living with HIV & AIDS.
- God's blessing in every effort to mentor and train believers in discipleship.

Opportunities

[Boarding Parents](#)

[Missionary Staff Physician](#)

[All Ethiopia Opportunities](#)

Projects

[Deborah House](#)

[Sports Friends team building](#)

[All Ethiopia Projects](#)

Stories

[Those who can — teach](#)

[A New Life for Hiwot](#)

[All Ethiopia Stories](#)