



Update from David Ford December 2020

Dear friends,

There has been a lot of change in my life and plans during these past couple of weeks. It has been difficult to determine when I know enough about what's going on in my life to be able to write to you!

First, you may well have seen Ethiopia in the world news lately, as there have been new and fairly high-profile conflict centered around Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. News reports can provide you with some background information. Though this conflict has become big news, it is so far confined to the northern part of Ethiopia. Life in Addis Ababa has been completely normal and peaceful. There have been no internet cuts the way there often are when there is unrest that affects Ethiopia more widely (you may recall the two-week countrywide internet cut in July.) SIL Ethiopia does not have any projects in the northern part of the country either, since there is very little language diversity in that area. Still, the situation is very worrying, and obviously, conflict and fighting are not desirable, so I would ask you to pray for peace in Ethiopia.



Second, my travel and vacation plans have changed several times in the past couple of weeks due to the changing health of my grandmother. I have had flights booked to spend my usual Christmas vacation with my parents in Beirut, starting November 28. However, on November 9 my grandmother "Lola" was diagnosed with leukemia. This led to both my parents and I both considering travel to the U.S. on short notice. Lola was initially expected to live for several more months; however, on Saturday, Nov. 14 I woke up to the news that she had quite suddenly passed away the previous day. My parents are now both in the U.S. to attend the funeral and to take care of the many property logistics, including the condominium which they jointly owned with my grandmother and which has been my brother's address since he graduated

from university in 2017. My parents and I decided that, due to the abrupt death, there was not enough reason for me to return to the U.S. at this time. So, I will stay in Ethiopia for the time being. My parents will return to Beirut in early January, and I have postponed my vacation time

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until they return, and will spend January to February in Beirut instead. I am actually quite grateful that this all happened quickly, providing clarity to what each of our plans should be.

In the meantime, work has continued. SIL Ethiopia has been cautiously reopening the office with additional health precautions. I am routinely there on Wednesdays, but still do the rest of my work remotely from the Mennonite compound where I'm still living. (As a side note, I expect that I will have to end my time at MCC before my Beirut vacation in January and return to my apartment, as Bruce and Rose will be preparing to finish up their term and their replacements will be arriving in January and will need my room.) My workload has been nicely full with a variety of tasks, several of which have been new tasks lending my skills in organization and attention to detail to administrative projects. One job I have been working on is compiling and consistently formatting the job descriptions and annual work plans for all our staff. It's also the time to update the data we provide to the *Ethnologue*—SIL's reference guide of the world's languages—in preparation for their every-three-years Africa-focused edition which will release early 2021. This job of identifying language experts, preparing and emailing the right language questionnaires to the right individuals, and figuring out how to apply the experts' recommended changes to the *Ethnologue's* database is one that consumes a lot of my time at the present.

I'd like to leave you with a short three-minute video clip that was recently produced by a visiting photojournalist to show and explain the work of SIL Ethiopia. It's worth a watch. https://youtu.be/PhvYa_lIfgM.

Blessings,

David