



October 2023

Dear Friends,

On a recent visit to a supporting church, I was interviewed by the pastor during a “minute for mission” in a worship service. One of the questions he asked was:

“Where do you see God working right now?”

I answered by showing this picture:



This, from the outset, has been the focus of my ministry which was a call to help revitalize a Christian/Muslim Relations study program at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, that was in danger of shutting down: the focus was on the students who were hungry to learn what they needed to know to develop a well-informed, Christ-centered ministry among their Muslim neighbors. That’s what it was about when Lynne and I began this journey nearly four years ago (with a four-year commitment to the task). That’s what it remains about today. And now, by the grace of God, I can look back with gratitude to say not “mission accomplished” (see below), but “praise God for what has happened so far:”

- There was a lack of faculty members to teach the required courses when I started. Now there are two full-time Ethiopian professors (both with PhDs) and several others as adjunct professors, one of whom has started work on a PhD sponsored by a Norwegian mission organization.

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- The library needed a fresh infusion of up-to-date research materials. I was able to find 269 books to add to the library thanks to the [Theological Book Network](#) based in Grand Rapids.
- Peter Ford (who helped start the program in Christian/Muslim Relations at the seminary in 2002) and I put together a catalog of over 1,500 articles that the students now have access to, even as we were able to shift them towards online resources in their classes.
- (most critical) Thanks to generous RCA donors and Northwestern College all students in the MA program, and some in the BTh program, have laptops to use. That's a huge need as most of these students cannot afford to purchase laptops.
- A new MA program was added last year to prepare pastors to become teachers themselves, thus expanding the program's reach.
- A proposal that came out of the first thorough review of the program is now on its way to implementation—a Center for Christian/Muslim relations that will expand the impact of the mission to church leaders and international visitors as they come to learn about and participate in a dialogical witness in the Ethiopian context.

This is where God is working right now—through these students and others like them who are being prepared for a vital witness among their Muslim neighbors through a revitalized Christian/Muslim Relations study program at the seminary.

I am making a trip to Ethiopia in just over a week's time to do a final review and look forward with my colleagues to what is coming next. For me what is coming next is retirement at the end of December. But the task is by no means finished, particularly as the RCA is now actively searching for someone who will come as a full-time director of the proposed Center. If you know of anyone who might be interested in applying, here is the ad:

[Director of Christian/Muslim Relations Center: Mekane Yesus Seminary | Reformed Church in America \(rca.org\)](#)

What I'm hoping is that you might consider transferring the support you have so generously given to me to the person who will come on board as director (hopefully and prayerfully soon!). Or, if you feel so led, transfer that support to a scholarship fund that the RCA has established to allow students to be in this program. The eleven MA students you see in the picture (out of twelve—one was absent when the picture was taken) are only able to be in the program because of this fund (currently \$16,000/year, but more would certainly be welcome). In either case, support is necessary to allow what has happened so far to continue. I would love to hear that you are going to be a part of the future of the program, as well.

Thanks much for all that you have done to make this ministry possible. I've said it before, I'll say it again: none of this could have been possible without you. Thanks much for making it possible!

John Hubers