



Master Builder Center

Fall 2011 Newsletter

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Master Builder Center

Planting the seeds, nurturing the harvest

Opportunities for being Christ to children abroad

By Kris Ficken

Two years ago, my husband, Rev. Dave Ficken, and I were in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia meeting our children for the first time. On September 9, 2009, Dave, Rebeka, Tigist, Abush and I walked down the steps of the U.S. Embassy in Addis as the "Ficken Five". We had become an instant family through the blessing of adoption. Now two years later, we are a family of five with two dogs and a cat, living in central Wisconsin. While the lives of these children have changed greatly, we are also changed forever through this journey of adoption.

Dave and I had often talked about adoption since our marriage in 2005, and after several months of infertility procedures, we knew God was directing us down the path of adoption. We interviewed several adoption agencies and attended many "adoption informational meetings," while Dave was attending seminary in St. Louis, MO.

International adoption was the path we knew we wanted to walk and after much prayer, we knew the children that God had for us were in Ethiopia.

We moved to central Wisconsin for Dave's first call to Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in 2007. Once here, we began the long journey of paperwork and meeting with our social worker. On January 27, 2009, we learned of Rebeka, Tigist and Abush and we accepted our referral that day. We knew these children were to be part of our family. Nine months later, we traveled to Ethiopia to meet them and bring them to their new home in America.

Once we accepted the referral for our three children, the wait to finally meet them seemed to take forever! During this waiting period, we

prepared their rooms, bought their clothes and all the necessities of 6, 8 and 10 year olds and prayed and prayed and prayed that God would bind our hearts between the miles! Finally, on August 25th we found out that we needed to be in Ethiopia by September 5th (that meant leaving the US on September 3rd). That gave us a whole eight days to find two plane tickets over and 5 back and housing arrangements in a place we had never been before.



While my husband and I are experienced world travelers, a sense of nervousness set in, knowing we had to find a guest house to reside in while in Addis Ababa. There is no "priceline.com" or internet search to find a guest house in Addis, but once again, we witnessed God's divine providence in this journey.

That week, a member of our congregation forwarded an electronic link to the Lutheran Church Charities newsletter. In that newsletter was an article titled, "LCMS Pastor Starts Orphanage in Ethiopia". Of course, I was immediately drawn to that article and video about the Master Builder Center and Rev. Tilahun Menedo. Little did I know at that time, that this article would be so influential in our own adoption journey. Dave contacted Rev. Menedo and in turn, he contacted Rev. Mengesha in Addis Ababa. They had secured housing for us at the Mekane Yesus Guest House in Addis. Praise God! We were on our way!

Upon our arrival to Addis, we were taken to our Guest House and the accommodations were perfect for Dave and me. Not only did we have a place to stay, we also had a place to worship on Sunday. The service lasted 3 hours and we worshiped with hundreds of Ethiopians in a packed church. It was an experience we will never forget.

We arrived home on September 12, 2009 and while we had prepared for the kids' arrival in the material way, God was preparing our hearts for something much larger. About 4 months after the kids had been home, we felt God was leading us down another path in this adoption journey. We had invited Pastor Menedo to come and visit us and share the story of the Master Builder Center to our congregation that October. Something kept stirring in my heart about this program and about all the kids who were still on the streets in Ethiopia.

That January, we started an Orphan Ministry at our church, supporting adoption, foster care and global orphan care. *Project Smile* was launched to our congregation on Mother's Day of that year. After much prayer and consideration, our team knew it wanted to continue to support the Master Builder Center in Ethiopia as our global orphan care part of the ministry.

According to UNICEF, there are between 143 million and 210 million orphans worldwide. That number is staggering and to be quite honest, it is really incomprehensible to us as humans. Having walked down the streets of Addis Ababa and seeing so many children on the streets by themselves, I began to get a glimpse of what this number means. There were little kids (5 or 6 years old) taking care of their little brother or sister – on the streets, begging, and sometimes, just standing there with lifeless eyes. Even witnessing this, it is still so difficult to comprehend. The reality of this situation is that only a small percentage of these children will be available for adoption in the traditional sense. And only a small number of these children will be

taken in by others in their own communities to be cared for and "adopted." As much as Dave and I would have loved to scoop up all these beautiful children and bring them home to a loving and Christ-filled home, we knew that was impossible.

From that moment on, God opened and revealed to us so much more about adoption than our very narrow view when we began this journey.

I am in no way a theologian or have any formal training in theology. Reading and hearing about our adoption as sons and daughters of Christ in the books of Romans, Galatians and Ephesians really never "clicked" with me, until we adopted Rebeka, Tigist and Abush. I knew that I was a child of God through my baptism, but at times, I just didn't "get it". There have also been times in my life when I've struggled with my own identity, even though I grew up with my biological mom and dad and grew up in the church.

Finally, through the adoption journey of our three kids, I am beginning to see what Christ has done for me. I know that I have been marked as one with Christ in my baptism. I now "get it" that my adoption by Christ was accomplished despite my condition. I certainly didn't "deserve" being chosen by God. I didn't go and find God, but God found me. Christ initiated all – I am adopted and reconciled to Christ by what He did for me – suffering for me. And now, I am part of another family – God's family. And nothing will separate me from the love of God – my adoption will never be revoked.

God speaks throughout the entire Bible about caring for the *orphan*, for the *widow*, for the *fatherless*. We read about this from Exodus through the New Testament. While I know God doesn't call each of us to adopt, He does call each of us to care for "the least of these." This can take on many different forms. For some of us, the call is to adopt and bring these children into our homes and lives. For others it may be to care for children through foster care. For those who have been gifted

financially, it may mean that they support other families who are going through the adoption process. Retired individuals with more time may find they can serve by mentoring older kids in the foster care system or kids who have aged out of the foster care system. And for others, it may be that they can financially support a child through sponsorship.

This is why we knew we wanted to meet Pastor Menedo and learn more about the Master Builder Center in Ethiopia. For those who are not called to adopt in the traditional sense and bring children into their own home, MBC offers the opportunity to serve the needy child in Ethiopia through sponsorship. Through child sponsorship and supporting future pastors in Ethiopia, we can continue to care for the orphan in Ethiopia and serve the One who gives us life. We can help to relieve the effects of poverty and provide the child shelter, food and clothing. We can be influential in ending the cycle by aiding in the child's education. And we can provide encouragement to family members and relatives on how to provide healthy role-models and support in their preparations for independent life. MBC has given Dave and me the opportunity to continue supporting the children of Ethiopia.

Through Christian love and compassion and to fulfill God's call to us, we can help a child in need – one who at this time might be on a street by themselves or may have just witnessed the death of a parent. We can be the hands of Christ on earth.

Feeding His Lambs



Christmas 2008

Feeding His Lambs

In November 2008, Master Builder Center (MBC) launched its campaign "Feeding His Lambs" to enable at risk children to gain a competitive education. As a first initiative a Christmas card campaign focused on this ministry and made others aware of the great opportunity for ministry there. We will launch the 2009 "Feeding His Lambs" program in October. In a year when we are pressed from all sides by the economic downturns, it becomes even more important to invest wisely in the future.



Jesus said to Peter "do you love me....then feed my lambs" (John 21:15-19). We are the heirs to that call, and like Peter we are given the unique opportunity to feed His lambs. In Ethiopia today, thousands of families lack needed food and shelter, and as a result their children often end up on the street, separated from their families. The Master Builder Center's "Feeding His Lambs" program is designed to insure that children can stay with their families until the children have graduated from high school and able to take their place in building the Ethiopian society and the Ethiopian church. By reaching these lambs at an early age (3-6 years old on average) this

program nurtures many lambs to be leaders who will shepherd the next generation of lambs. It also gives them insight into how Jesus cares for all His lambs. They will become new "Peters," our successors who will follow Him.

We ask you to consider a gift to feed these lambs and we also ask you to consider giving to loved ones a gift that grows. At Christmas we all gave out a lot of candy, sweaters and toys, many of which were quickly packed away and forgotten. As an alternative, think about giving your children, friends and parents a gift of feeding his lambs for special events and for memorials. Feeding one of these children for one month costs \$30. Each of the lambs is carefully chosen, and the MBC staff in Ethiopia insures that the funds allow the selected children to maintain their family connections and succeed in school.

If you wish to help your lamb or other lambs in the MBC flock, prayerfully consider support through one of the following donation levels:

- Noviate Shepherd:** \$30 per month will support one child
- Shepherd:** \$360 will fully support 1 child for 1 year
- Shepherd for Life:** A \$3,000 donation will provide the permanent support for 1 child through high school graduation.

Master Builder Center is a US corporation (Incorporated in Alabama as a 501 (c) (3) organization under

IRS regulations and all contributions are tax-deductible under the provisions of this code.

All United States based staff and board members are volunteers and are not compensated or reimbursed for their expenses by MBC. 98% of all donations for "Feeding His Lambs" are distributed directly for the support of the lambs. The remaining 2% of funds support the transfer and distribution of the funds and the oversight of the lambs in Ethiopia. An interdenominational Board of Directors oversees all operations of the Center.

NEW OPPORTUNITY

Reaching out to the East **Antioch Christian Academy (ACA)**

In 2011, the MBC Board was asked to consider taking over the US fiscal component of the ACA mission. International Partners in Mission had been the conduit for donation throughout the build-out phase of ACA, and had provided nearly \$400,000 to complete the project. In the new phase, many donors wanted to continue to support ACA's mission to the orphans and very poor children of Manipur by providing tuition and room and board for the neediest children. The MBC board saw this as an opportunity to expand the total mission, closely aligned to the original mission of MBC's "Feeding His Lambs." Thus, we have many of the ACA donors now contributing to a separate MBC fund to support this mission. We hope that all of the MBC donors will realize the great opportunities that we have together to build His flock in both locations.

Manipur is one of the states of India, situated at the extreme northeast of India bordering

Myanmar to the east. Manipur is a land of blue Hills and green Valleys. Its population is 2,721,756 according to 2011 census and the total area is 22347 sqm. The valley is dominated by the people group call 'Meitei' who are Hindus and the hill is dominated by various Tribes and they are Christians. Manipur has no big industry. The people depended on government jobs. Government job creation is very rare. People depended on cultivation from small land they own for cultivation. The tribal people depends their livelihood through jhum (shifting) cultivation. Schools, hospitals and markets are far from their villages. The roads leading to the village is deplorable. Most of the tribal people live from hand to mouth. They are unable to send their children to a school. Seeing the hardship of these people Rev. Roel P Moyol and his wife Mrs. Ng Shangthar had a great vision to start a School and Children Home for the orphans, and destitute children in Manipur.

In 2006, they created the Antioch Christian Academy (ACA), where they welcome children and help them



grow physically, morally, spiritually and intellectually. They wish children from different background and communities to come and mingle together and receive quality education under their care and protection. ACA takes pride in accepting children irrespective of their community, tribe, color etc.

The school is taught in English and Hindi, and ensures that ethics, socialization, appropriate discipline and manners are taught. The school while imparting the prescribed academic curriculum also provides extracurricular activities for all round personality development.

The school derived its name (Antioch) from the place at which the followers of Christ were first called "Christians." Thus, Antioch is the birth place of the name "Christians," and our desire is to make this institution a springboard to a great Christian presence in Manipur and Asia. Hence, we named our school as "Antioch Christian Academy".

Antioch Children home provides free food, shelter, education, medical facility, spiritual love, and care for orphans who attend the school, including 27 boys and 12 girls. The waiting list for new applicants is long.

ACA MORNING PRAYER

Our father in heaven
 We thank you for this bright morning,
 As we come to this school by you grace,
 We pray you to open our eyes, our minds,
 And direct us to learn and to love our
 brothers and sisters,
 And help us to be faithful and obedient to
 our teachers.
 Keep us from all wrong and guide us
 throughout the day, For this we pray in your
 name and for your glory, Amen.

MEET THE BOARD

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WANT TO JOIN IN FEEDING HIS LAMBS?

Please make checks payable to:
Master Builder Center

And **note if** you want your funds to specifically go to **Feeding the Lambs, the ACA Manipur project or MBC's seminarian mission efforts.**

And mail to
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2011 CHRISTMAS CARDS

will be ready to ship in mid-November. Please tell us how many cards you would like, by emailing or writing Michael Wyss (address to the left). Combining orders into bulk orders would be greatly appreciated.

Meet some of His Lambs



MBC's Mission for Strengthening Christ's Ministry in Ethiopia

MBC's vision includes a tripartite outreach program:

1. **“Feeding His Lambs,”** as described above, is focused on raising up the next generation of Shepherds for the ministry. Children who would otherwise be abandoned are kept with their larger family through high school graduation, and thereby raised up to be competitive in college and career and leaders of the church.
2. **“Empowering the Shepherds”** is a program that provides scholarships to seminary students in Ethiopia to assist them in completing their training and become leaders in the church. In return, the students will each be responsible for the oversight of 3 of the Lambs. They also gain *service learning* training by working with these Lambs; lessons that are invaluable for their future ministry.
3. **“Building the Church”** is a program to assist ministers in difficult situations in Ethiopia. Like Paul, these missionaries for the church can often feel alone, but like the Philippians, this program provides support that makes these ministers realize the larger family of Christ that stands at their service.

**Order Your
2011 CHRISTMAS CARDS
early from MBC.**

We intend to begin shipping them in mid November. There is no charge for the cards, but we welcome whatever donation you give. Please tell us how many cards you would like, by emailing or writing Michael Wyss (jmwyss@uab.edu). Combining orders into bulk orders would be greatly appreciated.

