

Monday 17th February

East Africa

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth” Ps 57:5

East Africa has a wide diversity of approximately 70 different ethnic groups among 300 million people. Only Somalia has a population made up of mainly one ethnic group (85% Somali). The major cities of East Africa are centres of modern global development, especially in Ethiopia and Sudan. The outlying regions retain a traditional rural and agricultural or nomadic lifestyle.

The region’s greatest struggle is poor leadership, which only worsens ethnic conflicts and leads to a host of problems such as unaffordable medical services, unemployment and a lack of food, shelter and clothing for far too many of the population. Most of East Africa’s people still struggle below the poverty line.

Militant Muslims have recently destabilised large areas; Somalia and Sudan are two of the most dysfunctional nations in Africa. Somalia is infamous for piracy off its coast and Eritrea’s struggle with tyrants is so debilitating that it has become the poorest and most restricted nation in Africa.

Muslims are increasingly occupying key government positions. Persecution of those becoming followers of Christ varies widely in this region, ranging from community rejection in Tanzania, to intense disapproval in Ethiopian cities, to violence in Somalia. Yet the number of followers of Christ is increasing.

For more information and prayer fuel for this region, watch this video clip from Prayercast: <https://prayercast.com/east-africa.html>

- Pray for transformation in this region and freedom from poverty and a lack of basic resources.
- Pray for an end to war and conflict, and for peace and stability in the region that allow more people to hear about Jesus.
- Let’s ask God to reveal Himself to Muslim leaders, sheiks and imams who then follow Jesus and lead their communities to do the same.

Source: <https://prayercast.com/east-africa.html>

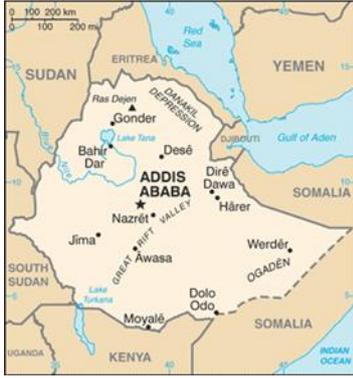
Tuesday 18th February

Ethiopia **Pop: 113.5 million** **Muslim: 34%**

Ethiopia is the oldest independent nation in Africa and one of the oldest in the world, giving it a rich and distinct cultural heritage. It shares borders with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan and Sudan and in eastern Africa.

Agriculture has been the foundation of the Ethiopian economy for centuries; Ethiopian coffee, enjoyed throughout the world, is the nation’s main export. However, years of over-cultivation and unreliable weather have caused frequent droughts, famines, and eventually civil unrest. As a result,

a Marxist junta overthrew the long-standing monarchy in 1974. Many of the same problems brought an end to the junta in 1991 and led to the establishment of a democratic government. Though now considered one of Africa's most stable nations, the previous troubled years have also left Ethiopia one of the poorest.



Today the country faces many challenges. There is a shortage of foreign currency, growing inequality, a lack of jobs for a huge number of graduates, environmental damage and ethnic tension. At least 70% of the population is below the age of 30 with the average age of the population being approximately 19 years.

Christianity has been a part of everyday life in Ethiopia since the fourth century. Approximately 60% of Ethiopians consider themselves Christians. However, fear of Muslims often means local believers do not reach out to them with the gospel message. This is why Christian workers go to this country. We heard a very encouraging report last year of a number of new Muslim background believers being baptised!

There is a strong Muslim influence, 34% of the population is Muslim. Both faiths have lived relatively peaceably alongside each other, but some Islamic groups are threatening that fragile peace.

- Pray for a softening of the hearts of militant Muslims so they will receive the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Let's pray for the church in Ethiopia to be a symbol of God's love, power and presence and one that reaches out to its neighbours and neighbouring people groups and countries, particularly Eritrea on its northern border.
- Pray for all gospel workers in this country as they seek to bring the Good News to their Muslim neighbours, that they would have wisdom, equipping and favour.

Source of most material: <https://prayercast.com/ethiopia.html>

Wednesday 19th February

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19

In April 2018, Abiy Ahmed (pictured) was elected Prime Minister and pledged to bring more transparency to government and reconciliation to a country that has been torn by protests since 2015. He is Ethiopia's first leader from the Oromo ethnic group, which has been at the centre of anti-government protests since 2016.

Shortly after his election to power, he brokered a peace deal with neighbouring Eritrea. This ended a long and bloody conflict that had lasted nearly twenty years. Primarily as a result of this, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2019. As peace talks have stalled, at the end of last year Abiy



Ahmed said he wanted to meet the president of Eritrea to pursue talks again. Border crossings between the two countries remain closed.

Abiy Ahmed is bringing in reforms. Like other African countries, such as Kenya and Zimbabwe just over a decade ago, Ethiopia has tried to reform its closed, autocratic system, but with little success. The prime minister faced the first major challenge to his leadership in a coup attempt in Amhara State in June last year. The army chief and governor of Amhara State were killed in putting down the coup. In August this year, national elections are planned. The longing for change remains.

- Pray for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to be a strong but flexible leader, who combines justice and mercy and who is able to bring people along with him as he seeks to bring change, reconciliation and unity.
- Abiy Ahmed wants to bring lasting peace and stability to the country and region. Let's pray that he will come to know the only true giver of peace and will have wisdom and favour as he seeks to bring hope to the people of Ethiopia.
- Pray for talks to resume between the president of Eritrea and Abiy Ahmed, bringing longed-for reconciliation and healing between these two countries.
- Pray for fair elections to be held, despite tensions between different ethnic groups.

Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349398>

Thursday 20th February

How the gospel is spreading in East Africa

Read this encouraging story from a Frontiers worker of how God is bringing change in East Africa:

“My language tutor is a woman named Salma. She’s also helping my teammates and me refine the story-based health lessons we offer in communities and villages. Over the years, we have shared Bible stories with her and she’s gradually drawing near to Christ.



A few months ago Salma’s sister, Mahmuna, asked us to come to her village to share these lessons with other women in her small community. So once a week, we began driving 30 miles into the desert to teach them. Then the rainy season came and made the road impassable. It was weeks before we were able to return.

As I began to recap the previous lessons, Mahmuna interrupted me. She shared how she had gone to another village and found people suffering from diarrhoea. She showed them how to make the oral rehydration solution we had taught her about in a previous lesson and everyone got better. There were also many malnourished children in the village. So Mahmuna taught another group of villagers to make the nutrition supplement that we had showed her.

“I’m not a doctor,” Mahmuna told the people in the village. “But I have learned things from a woman who taught me. Now you know a few things you can teach others.”

It was then time for the Bible story portion of the lesson. Previously we had shared stories about Old Testament prophets. This time we described Jesus’ birth, the shepherds in the field and the prophecies of Simeon and Anna in the temple. The women interrupted the story with excited comments. “Do you understand this?” they asked one another. “Do you hear this good news?” We had hardly finished before they started retelling it to each other!

“These stories are important and beautiful,” Mahmuna said. “People in other villages need to hear them too.”

- Let’s praise God for how the gospel is spreading among Muslims in this region!
- Pray that Mahmuna and other women will believe in Christ and share the Good News in other villages.
- Ask God to equip Frontiers teams to bring lasting transformation to Muslim communities.

Source: <https://frontiersusa.org/blog/gospel-is-spreading-in-muslim-villages/>

Friday 21st February

Eritrea **Pop: 5.5 million** **Muslim: 50%**

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” Romans 13:1

The Italians created the colony of Eritrea in the late 19th century around Asmara, its capital today. After World War 2 Eritrea became part of Ethiopia. The UN established this country as an



independent federal part of Ethiopia in 1952. The settlement disregarded Eritrea’s desires for complete autonomy and was unpopular with Ethiopian leaders who then annexed the nation 10 years later. This marked the beginning of Eritrea’s 30-year struggle for independence, which finally happened in 1991.

In 1998, border conflict resurfaced, and two years of fighting claimed the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers, before a peace agreement was reached in 2000. Today, Eritrea is a one-party state in which national parliamentary elections have never been

held. Isaias Afwerki is the first and current president of Eritrea, a position he has held since 1993.

Years of intense investment in the military have led to the neglect of the population's general welfare and the basic systems and infrastructure of the nation. Improper agricultural management has left two-thirds of its population dependent on food aid and created an economy with few skilled workers.

There are four government-recognised religions; Sunni Islam is the largest with half the country's population being Muslim. Three Christian denominations are recognised. However, hundreds of believers who are members of unregistered churches are in prison. This year Eritrea is ranked number 6 by Open Doors, making it one of the world's most challenging places to live as a follower of Christ. Full religious freedom is desperately needed. Even so, churches in Eritrea are growing despite sanctioned opposition with many believers having moved 'underground' through the establishment of house-churches.

- Pray that the Lord would preserve his people in Eritrea and grant them freedom from political and religious oppression.
- Eritrea is a closed country with few opportunities for workers to enter. Pray for this to change and for open doors for Christian workers to return.
- Please pray God would reveal Himself to Isaias Afwerki, causing a complete change in his heart and that he would work to pursue peace talks with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of neighbouring Ethiopia.

Source of some material: <https://prayercast.com/eritrea.html>

Saturday 22nd February

Asmara

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity... For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore" Psalm 133:1, 3b

Asmara was first settled in 800 BC with a population ranging from 100 to 1,000. The city was itself founded in the 12th century AD after four separate villages unified to live together peacefully after long periods of conflict.



The missionary Remedius Prutky passed through Asmara in 1751 and noted in his memoirs that a church built here by Jesuit priests 130 years earlier was still intact.

Asmara was a small village in the 19th century, but started to grow quickly when it was occupied by Italy in 1889. By the late 1930s, Asmara was called Piccola Roma (Little Rome). Nowadays, more than 400 buildings are of Italian origin and many shops still have Italian names. Cafes and restaurants serve Italian Eritrean cuisine. However, almost nothing has been built there since the turn of the millennium. Years of economic slowdown

are reflected in worn-out facades, shuttered restaurants and half-empty corner shops. Now there is peace with Ethiopia, there is the chance for the city to develop. Asmara was listed as a UNESCO world heritage site in July 2017.

Four big landmarks in the city are three churches and a mosque. Christians and Muslims have lived peacefully together in Asmara for centuries. The religious majority in Asmara are Orthodox Christians, making up 89% of the population, with 5% Muslims. It was here that President Afwerki Isaias was born. Today visitors can travel to the capital, but movement elsewhere is quite difficult.

- Let's pray that the Christian majority in the capital will reach out to their Muslim neighbours.
- Ask for the three landmark churches to attract and welcome Muslims and for the leadership to be equipped to disciple them.
- Pray for the Eritrean diaspora to come into contact with believers and to share this knowledge with family and friends when they return home.