

**ADDIS ABABA 2001**

"The country is wide open now"

Mekuria's words seemed to light up my thinking.

I first met Mekuria on my visit to Ethiopia in 2001 when I travelled to explore the possibility of radio there. At that time Ethiopia's population was 80 million; there seemed to be more orthodox churches than water wells in rural communities and at that time, locals were reportedly receiving up to \$500 to convert to Islam.

And there were no FM radio stations. Only one government owned and operated national network of FM radio stations provided news for its population. Christian radio was not allowed.

But we had been broadcasting into and across Ethiopia since 1996 when Christian Ethiopians approached us in Toronto. On my 2001 trip I heard our own shortwave broadcast loud and clear in downtown Addis Ababa. And then again in the town of Assela where I can still remember enjoying the best cup of macchiato in memory, sitting at a small dust covered metal table, in a street café where all the sights, sounds and smells of thick diesel smoke and animal traffic created an unforgettable environment!

At that time, Mekuria was a radio programmer for another radio ministry and like us, they were broadcasting daily across the 19 Ethiopian provinces. Ethiopia's flirtation with Communism (1974-1991) left a trail of damaged people, many for their faith. It was those Christian leaders that had found their way to us and it was their voices heard on our Bible Voice network every day.

After an unsuccessful attempt to apply for an FM radio license, I returned to Canada, continuing our daily shortwave outreach from here. Mekuria eventually stepped away from the microphone and travelled the entire country, evangelizing as he did.

But COVID changed all that. Public gatherings are no longer safe or allowed since Africa has far fewer resources to face COVID challenges; isolation is their strongest time-tested weapon for disease control.

## **PRAYING**

Mekuria's voice was coming from Addis Ababa but it sounded next door. He went on to explain after 10 years of rural evangelism, COVID did what even persecution ([www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org)) could not-it stopped personal evangelism. He had been praying about the next steps to reach his nation and I came to his mind. So, he dug through old business cards and found mine, exclaiming "I am so happy you are still alive." (me too)

He went on to describe the openness that exists in Ethiopia now. The president is a declared believer and the city of Addis Ababa has freedom to worship God. Although there is still no Christian radio in the nation, Addis Ababa now has Christian programming seen on its televisions and more affluent Christians can even hear programming on the internet.

But Mekuria's heart burns for those who cannot hear. Ethiopia today is 112 million people, and nearly 80% living in rural communities where TV cannot reach. Even if it could, most are too poor to own a TV and definitely not internet. The only way to reach 90 million unreached Ethiopians now, is what it was relevant in 2001; shortwave radio.



**ENJOYING ETHIOPIAN  
HOSPITALITY-COFFEE  
AND POPCORN**



**ETHIOPIAN SHORTWAVE LISTENER  
LETTERS ARRIVE IN ADDIS ABABA**

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CHECKING OUR SHORTWAVE  
BROADCAST IN DELHI 2001



HIGH ADVENTURE'S PRODUCER  
CHUCK SETTING UP STUDIO  
IN KOLKATA



MONGU VOLUNTEER TRANSLATES  
IMPAX INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOZI-  
SPEAKING RECIPIENTS

Mekuria's plea was so clear "Brother Don, if I can find money here to get equipment to make programs and if I will do it for free, **can you find help with the airtime costs?**" I knew production is about 50% of the cost to create and air a program, and even with this bargain, I still need to find the other 50% (\$200 per month) to air his programs in Amharic language. I would appreciate prayer for this challenge!

He went on to remind me of what I already knew-Ethiopians speak 100 languages, but predominantly 3 (Amharic-Oromo-Tigrinya). As a true visionary he suggested we do all three languages since he is fluent in all of them. He was dreaming even faster than I was. But cost is my real challenge, so we agreed that I wait on the Lord for provision, beginning with Amharic.

COVID is closing communities and nations; could it be opening airwaves in greater measure?

## INDIA

I was thinking about Mekuria when Marty brought a listener response to me. Anand is a shortwave radio listener from Chhattisgarh. He shared COVID conditions that alarmed him, concluding with "Now the only solution is to pray to God and follow the instructions of the government authorities...I listen to various radio stations now; it is the **only source** to use time."

Anand's words were another sensory shock, reminding me that Mekuria's reality was not confined to Ethiopia. Each week Marty and I enjoy our church service online ([www.vvac.ca](http://www.vvac.ca)) and even peek into Sarah's church service ([www.ccv.church](http://www.ccv.church)) the same day; North Americans have good spiritual support. But what about the rest of the world?

Anand's letter arrived after hearing our shortwave broadcast. India is embracing digital communication but 75% of its 1.36 billion people still live in rural, non-digital communities. We must increase our shortwave broadcast there also, at least for the next 18 months as COVID causes a global lockdown extension. And we can definitely reach the entire population from one big shortwave transmitter-it requires \$400 per month-please pray with me on this for India.

## ZAMBIA

The heart-fire first ignited by Mekuria fanned a little brighter with the first listener report from Zambia this month. In 2014, we embarked on building a radio station in Lusaka, with a young Zambian believer we had known since first participating in her training some years back. The vision was for an indigenous Christian voice that reach Zambians for Jesus, in their own languages.

In 2019 we launched a project that expanded the Lusaka One Love FM voice into 3 additional city stations. Today, Kaluwa has expanded OLFM FM broadcasts to include **satellite radio** for Central/South Africa; **internet radio** for live streaming on [www.onelovezambia.com](http://www.onelovezambia.com) and even into the Smartphone community through the Radio Garden **APP**. OLFM now receives listener reports from Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Her online audience is expanding and now listeners contact from Lebanon and New Zealand.

Scanning through this month's OLFM report, I was reminded afresh of the strategic value radio has in our COVID world where global communities and its

ONE LOVE FM LISTENERS RECEIVE SOLAR POWERED IMPAX





churches are locked down and locked in. Thankfully, this has not surprised the Lord, who is not locked down and never will be. One of our programmers received a special note this month; this listener's words resonated...

M from Matero (Lusaka area) *A Look Into the Word teaching is a blessing to my family, especially **now that we don't go to church physically, we have church in the home every evening** we follow through and pray along with you, continue blessing us with God's true word.*

### BIGGER PICTURE

Our growing international FM radio partnerships now include 21 city communities in 9 countries, where 26+ million people can hear about Jesus, in their own language. On a regular basis we provide support of some kind, and it always requires funding. We would ask you to pray about supporting this effort from time to time-especially in these COVID days when radio is more relevant than ever!

### SPECIAL 41

In 1979, Marty and I answered the call of God to follow Him in radio ministry. On September 9, 1979 our founder George Otis Sr switched on the *Voice of Hope* AM station in embattled South Lebanon. For the next 21 years, we worked tirelessly and happily to support the Voice of Hope outreach as it grew.

But the time came when our calling matured into wider leadership with expanded opportunities that can be seen over the last 20 years of newsletters. But from the first day in 1979 until today, we share the same thought *"we cannot believe we get to do **this**."*

**THIS** is the opportunity to make Jesus known to the nations. Today, by His grace and leading, we find ourselves partnered with believers in Israel, Iraq, Haiti, Africa (Liberia-Ghana-Uganda-Kenya-South Sudan-Rwanda-Zambia) and Russia; our common goal now, is what our goal was in 1979-to make Him known!

Sometimes that is through media (radio-internet) and others through education, medical ministry, training, equipping and Bible distribution and more. But it's always the same goal-to make Him known!

### SAME ANNIVERSARIES

September 9, 2020 is the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of our calling to ministry together...but it's also our 48<sup>th</sup> marriage anniversary. We are celebrating by making Him known through Bible distribution (thanks to our friends). Money continues to arrive toward our dream of equipping Ugandan prisoners with their own Bibles. Marty and I have been very busy making the necessary arrangements-and **we love it**. I cannot think of a better way to enjoy our anniversary, than to know prisoners will have His Word! Captives can be free!

Don



GEORGE OTIS SR WITH DON, MARTY, GARY AND LORRAINE AT VOICE OF HOPE



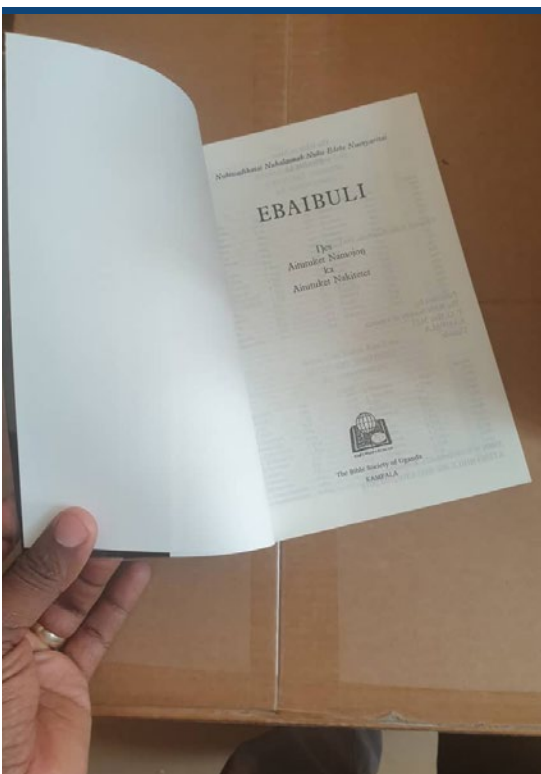
DON & MARTY 40-YEAR RADIO MINISTRY CONTINUES AT YOUTH FM IN UGANDA



ONE LOVE FM LISTENER WITH NEW IMPAX AT MONGU HOSPITAL



SOLAR POWERED LISTENING IN MONGU, ZAMBIA



UGANDAN PRISONERS WILL RECEIVE GIFT OF BIBLES FROM OUR SUPPORTERS



NEWS IN THE LAST 30 DAYS



HIGH ADVENTURE AND ONE TRIBE INTERNATIONAL PARTNER TO PROVIDE KAMPALA CHURCH LEADERS WITH SKILLS TRAINING AND SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT



LIFE ESSENTIALS CENTRE TOILET FACILITY IN MUKONO, NEARING COMPLETION



NEW BEE HIVES FOR BUTAMBALA COFFEE PROJECT



SOLAR POWERED BORE HOLE INSTALLED AT ONGUTOI HEALTH CENTRE



NEW SOLAR SYSTEM INSTALLED AND TOWER ADJUSTMENTS MADE AT KAKUMA FM (LOST BOYS OF SUDAN) REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA



NEW WATER STORAGE SYSEM INSTALLED FOR ONGUTOI HEALTH CENTRE STAFF

PLEASE COMPLETE THE PORTION BELOW AND RETURN IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED. THANK YOU.

My gift of ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ Other

SEPTEMBER 2020

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