

The following is the last chapter from the new book by Dr. Harold Adolph entitled “Today’s Decisions – Tomorrow’s Destiny”. It tells the story of the development of the Soddo Christian Hospital, the latest of the PAACS training sites. The book is expected to be available October 2, 2006 from White Birch Printing, Inc., 501 West Beaver Brook Ave., Spooner, WI 54801 (Tel: 715-635-8147; Fax: 715-635-7848; E-mail: john.wbp@centurytel.net) at an expected price of \$15 plus S/H.

## **Build a Mission Hospital Now?**

At age 67, God began challenging me to establish a new mission hospital in Ethiopia ... without visible resources! It was February 2000!

In 1996, when my wife, Bonnie Jo, and I returned from eight years in Niger, West Africa, I was completely exhausted. My ophthalmologist told me I had glaucoma and macular degeneration. Obviously, it was time to retire. So over the next several years, we traveled throughout the United States, participating in 136 surgical, obstetric and plastic surgery grand rounds at various US medical schools and training programs.

We then received a call to cover the surgical work of a former Ethiopian student from our original mission hospital. Obviously, we needed a surgeon with good eyesight. A surgeon friend from Australia agreed to meet us in Frankfurt and fly with us to Ethiopia. When my friend, Dr. Andrew Chew, preferred to assist rather than serve as the primary surgeon, I discovered that my vision problem was not so severe. Assisted by a headlamp and magnifying loops, my vision for surgery seemed better than ever. It did help that one of my patients, Dr. John Sheaffer, was praying for restored eyesight.

At this time I also was given a five-year medical license for Ethiopia. I began to realize that God was challenging me to trust HIM to establish a new hospital ... all without visible resources. The obstacles were obvious: It would be at least a ten-year commitment and would cost more than \$3 million. And it would be attacked at every stage by satanic forces disguised in various forms to prevent its completion or continuation.

A dedicated Ethiopian Christian, Ato Desalegn Enaro, whom I had known for many years agreed in 2004 to run it. I also teamed up with a former student of mine, Dr. Kelemu Desta, a general and plastic surgeon who had trained for four additional years in plastic surgery in Britain. Twenty-five years ago, I had worked closely with him for three years. God had given him a vision to return to his country and leave the luxuries of the West. We discussed and prayed about the multiple problems of establishing an Ethiopian Christian doctor mission hospital in Soddo, located in South-Central Ethiopia. We also prayed about the health and spiritual needs of the country.

We decided that we would follow the example of Hudson Taylor, in whose mission I had grown up, as well as the example of Rev. George Mueller and his orphanages. They prayed and God answered. Since God owned all the resources in the world, we presented our needs and trusted HIM to supply what we needed.

We knew it would be easier if someone gave the entire amount; we even knew wealthy friends who could help. But we wanted to trust God to provide. Along the way, we were frequently tempted to try other methods of raising the necessary funding, such as professional approaches to fundraising. We were sure that if we used these methods we could easily be misled. Since this was to be God's work, God, who didn't have any financial problems, could easily supply the needs for what HE wanted done when the timing was HIS time. This method, "opening the fish's mouth and pulling out the coin," brought excitement many times as we saw God working.

For example, the Christian Medical-Dental Association invited my wife and me to attend its annual meeting in Schroon Lake, New York in 2003 to receive the "Servant of Christ" award. At the last service donations totaled \$19,000. Later, another doctor gave \$20,000. On our last day in the USA before returning to Ethiopia we were given \$150,000 by a friend in Switzerland to finish Phase I. Before we left Switzerland on our way back to Ethiopia, a young couple donated funds for the maternity and pediatric wards of \$200,000.

In 1988 we had met a wonderful mission representative in Switzerland. He now has helped raise more than half of Soddo Christian Hospital's capital funds and equipment. In 2000, while in Switzerland we received a message that five pallets of medical equipment and supplies had been donated. The next day we were given \$700 for the new hospital. The following day we were invited for an interview with the Christian German-speaking editor of a European magazine, who wished to write an article on the new hospital, which was still in the planning stages.

This editor's office was adjacent to the office for "Bread for the World." There we heard of a Swiss hospital that was closing. By noon the next day we had been given an attic full of excellent hospital supplies. Next, a trucking firm offered the use of one of their trucks and a driver to move the equipment to a container. When checking on a container, we visited a medical supply house that received and shipped donated supplies around the world. There we heard: "We would not send anything to Ethiopia. Our last containers to Ethiopia were returned unopened."

By the end of our first week in Switzerland, we had filled two 44-foot-long containers and sent them by rail to Basil for transfer to a barge down the Rhine River to Rotterdam. Shipping would then take the containers to Djibouti, by rail to Addis Ababa and then by truck to Wolaitta Soddo, Ethiopia, where the Soddo Christian Hospital would be built. It took seven months to clear the containers.

Building of the hospital started in the month of June , 2002 with a gift of \$70,000 from Switzerland and a gift of \$100,000 from our US-based church.

Having built a previous 138-bed hospital in the same area, I already knew most of the problems. The first hospital had had five builders before completion. Some had disappeared with building funds. Some had left me with 115 building workers to direct while still operating a 105-bed mission hospital as the only doctor. With the new hospital I had hoped that things had changed. They hadn't!

After meeting with church leaders, government leaders, and interested citizens, we discovered that the government had twelve acres of land that had been saved for a hospital. This was available to us after carefully relocating eighteen squatter families, their crops, and completing assigned payments in front of court witnesses. This took only one and one-half years.

Working with the Ethiopian government was slow-going. We thought we could speed the process of getting approval for the architectural drawings by going through Ethiopia's Ministry of Health. But it took two years longer than expected. And we still were required to submit copies of the drawings to 128 government offices. Dr. Paulos Leka, a personal friend and associate of Dr. Kelemu Desta accomplished this work.

Securing a drilling rig for the hospital water supply was more of a challenge than expected. The wife of our chief medical officer and plastic surgeon, Mekdes Chaka, had been the Norwegian Lutheran's president's personal secretary for many years. Throughout the time of building the hospital she acted tirelessly as purchaser. Her brother held an important position with the organization. They were finally persuaded and able to help us. Water was reached at 127 meters.

Cement was frequently unavailable. Other times one needed to stand in line for several days or come at 2 a.m. to improve the chances. Building supply costs more than doubled. Patience, long-suffering and persistence were all necessary in dealing with building irregularities. Finding that both the hot and cold faucets were joined to the same pipe was not reassuring. Turning the shower on and having the water come out of a hole in the side-wall at face level was hilarious!

I Chronicles 28:20 was very important. It says, "Be strong and courageous and get to work. Don't be frightened by the size of the task, for the Lord my God is with you. He will not forsake you. He will see to it that everything is finished correctly." Deuteronomy 31:8 says, "The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear, or be dismayed."

God provided multiple helpers for the project. As we visited the many government offices, we met former patients whose lives had been saved at our previous hospital. One of the most prominent was the president of our zonal area of three million people. He said I had delivered him. His mother had told him that I had saved his life, as well as hers. I had told her that this son was a special gift from God and that she should raise him to love and serve God. His presence was a definite asset. Others in various offices told of mothers, fathers or relatives who had had surgery. It was obvious that the project would have been quite impossible without these previous contacts.

Our building contractor, Ato Yakob Gebeheyu, had had surgery from me when he was eleven years old because of severe burn contractures. He was eager to do everything possible for the new project.

More than 30 years ago, the man who became our assistant administrator, Ato Gebeheyu Utalo, had been bleeding to death and had been told in the capital city that there was nothing that could be done for him. That was when he showed up at our mission hospital.

The surgical removal of a bleeding Mekles diverticulum changed his outlook and contributed to his dedication as a servant of Christ.

Ato Desalegn Enaro, our director of development and administration for the hospital had been a loyal Bible translator. He had also run a government medical laboratory for many years. He served his church group as its secretary and project writer-manager for many years as well.

Ato Daniel Genebo, one of our hospital pastor-evangelists had been my former hospital administrator and had a passion to see the lost saved. He had a good understanding and compassion for the sick as he had attended our previous school for medical auxiliaries. Ato Silas Ade, our nursing supervisor had also been a former student at this same school. He was perfect for the job.

For six years I have been praying for a good staff and God continues to be answering my prayers even beyond my imagination.

God took me to a funeral in the United States. An orthopedic surgeon told me I should attend an orthopedic conference on intramedullary nailing for fractures, especially for the developing world. In spite of my definite preference for external fixators in the African setting, I attended. God had me meet a 50-year-old orthopedic surgeon in 2002 at this meeting. Dr. Duane Anderson has now worked with me since September 2005.

The first class of our local nursing school was another miracle. Thirty-one started out and twenty-seven finished the first two years. Now six hundred students attend a Medical Science College with nursing, pharmacy, and laboratory technician schools.

One of our biggest answers to prayer was the coming of Tigist Mamo, a very devoted Christian nurse. She has been instrumental in recruiting Christian doctors to join our hospital program. Two are now leaving for the Dominican Republic for eye specialty training and three have joined our surgical residency program. In August of 2006, two more residents joined us from Nigeria.

Obviously if you have a 73-year-old, partially blind surgeon, you still need to be thinking of new surgeons, both Ethiopian and Western. Securing the next generation of mission personnel is essential.

God answered our prayer on May 26, 2005 by sending a second Ethiopian surgeon, Dr. Ashenafi Getachew. He had been assigned to the medical school faculty in Jimma, Ethiopia for four previous years after finishing his training. He told me that I had treated him as a small infant for abdominal pain and distension. I had prayed over him for five days when God healed him. He is a dedicated servant of Christ and has a wonderful spiritual ministry as well.

Now we have a staff of one hundred and forty. They are part of a discipleship ministry conducted by our pastor evangelists. The “Jesus Film” is shown twice a day to more than five hundred patients and relatives. Already God has answered our prayers in seeing non-believers and even Muslims recognizing the claims of Christ. The chaplains recently shared an encouraging story about a Muslim man who was converted during his stay at

the hospital. He went home, proclaimed his conversion, and won 65 Muslims for the Lord! The new congregation is now meeting under a tree with grazing cows nearby.

Permission for opening the new hospital was a slow process. The people of our area pressured the government; they wanted to know when the hospital might open.

The government president for the entire southern district of Ethiopia with over 12 million people was a man named Heile Mariam Desalegn. God made it clear to us that it was time to present an update on the Soddo Christian Hospital to him personally.

The appointments were made. This was helped by the fact that one of our friends, Dr. Paulos Leka, had a brother that was acting as Heile Mariam Desalegn's private assistant. Added to this was the fact that our hospital director and project manager, Ato Desalegn Enaro, was a close friend of the president.

Dr. Kelemu Desta, Dr. Paulos Leka, Ato Desalegn Enaro, and I were finally ushered into the president's luxurious upper room office complete with lush furniture and fixtures. The desk was also equal to his position. Beautiful plantings were artistically arranged. We were cordially treated and it was evident that this was indeed the right time for the visit. My power point program for the new hospital went well and was greatly appreciated. He was happy to give his enthusiastic approval for opening the hospital! He also indicated that he would do anything necessary to help us open in the shortest possible time.

At a later visit in his office we discovered that my book, Today's Decisions -- Tomorrow's Destiny, given at a previous meeting, had not only been read but used for a book report in a training program for Ethiopian's top leadership. He was proud to tell us that his report had secured an A plus grade.

Before the Soddo Christian Hospital could open, the Zonal hospital health department needed to make a final inspection. Without this inspection nothing further could be done. The deadline for this inspection was only three days away. The local health inspectors said that it could not be done because the necessary form was in a distant office many miles away. It was evident that this was a cover up for inaction. Fortunately, our hospital director and project manager had two of his five children in the city where the special forms were located. A quick telephone call brought the unobtainable document on a bus the very next day. The local health inspectors were incapacitated with amazement!

The health office, however, still refused to do the inspection. In spite of personal visits to our local president and his full support, they were obviously being influenced by others who did not want the hospital. When only one hour was left before the inspectors needed to start, our administrators made another personal visit. The local president's office called and sent letters demanding prompt obedience. Finally, agreement for the inspection was obtained. The inspectors were very impressed with what they saw. The hospital easily passed! They said that there is not another hospital like this in the country. The necessary

documents were now in our hands with all the required stamps and signatures! Our many prayers were answered. Soddo Christian Hospital opened January 26, 2005.

On one of my quick and unexpected trips to Addis Ababa for the business work of getting the hospital documents in order, I found myself in a small hotel restaurant. At my table was the day's newspaper. On the front page was a half page ad with a beautiful picture of the new Korean Christian Hospital, which was having its inauguration on that very day. I decided to visit the next day. It was evident that the hand of God had directed us to be there on that particular day. We decided to pattern our work of medical evangelism after our Korean brothers' experience. The hospital would be registered as a private limited company instead of an NGO (non-government organization). The advantages would be great.

In keeping with this plan which was discussed in detail with the administration of the Korean Christian Hospital, we found ourselves in another process of obtaining necessary registration for the new hospital according to new guidelines. Two years later intensive work had brought no results. Our documents had been turned in appropriately, but they could no longer be found in the office. Again no further progress could be made without finding the two missing documents!

A providential chance meeting in the hallway of the Ministry of Investment brought a sudden answer to what had appeared a complete road block. The chief of the investment office records department met our assistant administrator Ato Gebeheyu Utalo. They had been long time friends over twenty years. The friendly director of records said he wanted to do everything possible to solve the problem. This meant going through all the desks of his employees when they were absent. In one of them he found one of the missing documents skillfully hidden in a hard to find area.

We still had one more document to find. We needed to pay for a laptop computer from a great helper for our hospital progress. Dr. Paulos Leka had worked long hours to free many of our 15 forty and twenty-foot sea containers with hospital supplies. While visiting his home, he found the missing document!

Now we needed the representatives of our foundation to sign the papers. Our daughter, Carolyn Joy, flew up from her bush clinic in southwest Ethiopia. Dr. Duane Anderson, Ato Desalegn and I drove up from Soddo Christian Hospital. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the Ministry of Investment agreed to have our three signatories for the St. Luke's Health Care Foundation, the owner of Soddo Christian Hospital, meet in the main office for signing all the documents! Our fingers were sore after affixing our full signatures to each page of several documents! That was a big day! It was appropriately celebrated at a nice Ethiopian restaurant afterwards.

Another challenge is the obtaining of medical personnel. The Bible clearly indicates that a beautiful palace doesn't necessarily make a good king. Good buildings don't necessarily make a good hospital. A hospital must have good doctors. Everyone knows that mission hospitals have a shortage of doctors and new ones are not tempted to help.

Life-style, time off, burnout, political challenges and the valuing of mission service are all factors.

African doctors have many of the same concerns as First World doctors. They look for better salaries, better working hours, and more advancement opportunities. Ethiopians are attracted to other African countries where they can earn ten times as much money. Surgical residency openings are hard to fill because of the known dangers of HIV exposure for surgeons.

Challenges are all around us but we hold fast to the principle that if it is God's will, there will be a way.

So, have we seen the Obvious Hand of God at work?

1. Eight of eleven buildings are completed and furnished.
2. Two staff homes and one duplex are completed and furnished.
3. We have seen the miraculous supply of funds for more than six years. As of August 2006, the total is \$3.2 million.
4. Fifteen shipping containers of equipment and supplies are at the hospital site.
5. Worldwide Laboratory, Inc helped us set up our laboratories.
6. We have had biomedical, x-ray, sterilizer and generator specialists for consultation and instruction.
7. A gifted national with special ability in maintenance, alternative energy, electricity, computer science and carpentry works with us.
8. We have been blessed by many visiting medical specialists, including an anesthesiologist, two laparoscopists, a urology team, two interns from Korea, and a team of fifteen from a six hundred-bed mission hospital in Pusan, Korea. Dr. Ruth Droppers, a geriatric specialist from the Netherlands and two volunteers from Switzerland, Elias and Micha Henny, helped with preparations for opening the hospital. A nurse anesthetist, administrator, nurses, artists, mechanics, and many others have come alongside.
9. After two years of work, we secured approval from the Ministry of Justice in fall 2004. This gave approval of the Soddo Christian Hospital project and proposed by-laws.
10. The registration, licensing, inauguration and dedication of the hospital are finally completed.
11. The establishment of the hospital as a private limited company with the Ethiopia's Ministry of Investment is finished.
12. A benevolence fund is established for patients needing financial help because of poverty, crippling, elephantiasis, urinary fistula after child birth, curable and preventable blindness.

13. Another organization is considering setting up an eye-training center at the hospital as one of five hundred sites world-wide
14. The Ethiopian registration of our U.S. based St. Luke's Foundation is completed.
15. The setting up of bank accounts for the hospital, foundation, special accounts, fistula project, and benevolence fund is done.
16. The establishment of a web site for the hospital at [www.soddochristianhospital.org](http://www.soddochristianhospital.org) is finished.
17. The hospital has been approved as a general surgery residency center for spiritual and surgical instruction. The hospital is the fourth African hospital in the program, sponsored by PAACS-CMDA (Pan African Academy of Christian Surgeons-Christian Medical Dental Association) and Loma Linda University.
18. An experienced orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Duane Anderson, in the prime of his career has come with his wife, Jackie, a gifted teacher, planning to stay for the duration of his career.
19. A wonderful staff of one hundred and forty Ethiopian Christians who wish to serve Christ together is a blessing.
20. A retired biochemistry professor, Dr. Gary Vanderkooi, serves as our financial consultant, advisor, and helper in many facets of the ministry.
21. Prayer released a sea shipping container of valuable medical supplies only two hours and 45 minutes before it was to be auctioned on the local market.
22. We have a relationship with World Medical Missions of Samaritan's Purse. This organization helps recruit visiting specialty surgeons.

So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven, which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.

So how can I encourage you to follow God's leading for the building of another mission hospital?

God is the one who presents us with opportunities disguised as impossibilities. If you accept the challenge even when it doesn't make any sense, if you go ahead even when you can't see the invisible resources God has in personnel and finance, you can expect to see daily miracles that will astound you!