



Transforming Lives. Strengthening Communities.

Testimony of a US Church Partnering in Ethiopia

In November of 2005, I traveled to Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria with a group of pastors to discover how our church could further the message of Jesus in these areas. Through much prayer and seeking, God directed us to invest the majority of our church's time, energy and resources in a strategic partnership with Sports Friends in Ethiopia. As I witnessed the incredible work that God had done in such a short time through Sports Friends, I was mostly impressed with their vision to focus on developing and training Ethiopian leaders to further the gospel. It didn't take long to see the impact of Ethiopian leaders passionately advancing the mission of Christ in their culture at great sacrifice and sometimes risk.

As our church began our partnership, we really had no idea what God had in store for us. The challenge of effectively advancing the gospel in a foreign culture is overwhelming. We were looking for places where we could send people on short-term trips that would effectively help a long-term ministry that existed 365 days a year. We also wanted to develop relationships so that we could be aware of and be responsive to needs as the ministry developed. Our partnership with Sports Friends has provided us with these routes so that our investment makes a difference every day, year after year.

The impact that this partnership has had on our church has been amazing. After traveling to Ethiopia on short term trips, a couple in our church (Mike and Amy Rodgers) has been led by God to sell their house and everything in it and serve with Sports Friends in Ethiopia. As a six-year old church, it is very exciting to support and send out our first full-time missionaries. The Rodgers' faith has been a catalyst to my faith and to many others in our church. As we support and celebrate them, they challenge us. Others in our church who have been to Ethiopia are actively pursuing Ethiopian adoptions. Their pursuit has made our church more acutely aware of our responsibility to the orphans in our world. The anticipation of what God will do in the lives of those who go on the next trip to Ethiopia has opened people's lives up to the possibilities of God in incredible ways.

These are but a few of the stories resulting from those who have traveled on short-term ministry trips to Ethiopia. The overall kingdom impact in the lives of those who have gone, their families, their communities and our church is immeasurable. I look forward to hearing similar stories from your church as you step out in faith in your partnership with Sport Friends.

Love loud ... risk often,

David Henderson
Lead Pastor, University City Fellowship (Charlotte, NC)