

# Far Trekkin'



*News from Rob and Eshinee Veith*

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## How I spent my “holidays”

by Rob

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana (ELCB) sponsors our visa to be in this country. I have had several opportunities to assist them in musical projects and workshops. In the first week of December, I helped lead the annual Music Workshop. For this workshop, church musicians and singers from all over the country came together for a week to improve their musical skills and knowledge as well as to fellowship and worship together.

I served as an instructor in three capacities. First, I taught a practical seminar on using sound equipment in church. Some of the ELCB congregations are getting mixing boards and amplifiers, but most of those who attend the church don't really know how to get the best sound from these devices. Then I gave a teaching entitled “The Bible, Music, and Culture.” This focused on what we can learn about the role of music and songs from how they are used in Scripture. The idea is that we have a lot of preconceptions about what kind of music is appropriate for church and life which come from tradition or culture. Traditional and cultural ideas about music aren't bad—unless they get in the way of true worship.

I have given variations on this talk several times now and it always sparks some interesting discussions. Congregations are debating whether to sing primarily translated hymns brought by missionaries long, long ago or compose their own songs. And, if they write new songs, should they be in traditional cultural styles or in popular contemporary styles? Do they *have* to compose songs that sound like hymns? Or should they definitely *not* do so? Coming to understand that the answer is not explicitly stated in the Bible—in fact, the Bible has criteria for judging music which has nothing to do with style—has helped people talk through this issue.

Thirdly, I assisted in instrument teaching. Each participant at the workshop specialized in a musical discipline. We had keyboards, vocals, guitars, and marimbas. There was a lot of interest in guitar, so the ELCB guitar teacher

(Ntirelang Berman, the 2007 winner of the Folklore Artist of the Year award in Botswana) recruited me to assist some of the more advanced students.

Ntirelang and I became fast friends. He is talking to me about helping him record a cycle of Setswana songs he has written that highlight the intersection between Setswana cultural values and Scriptural values. During a break in the workshop, he recorded some demo tracks of new songs in his dorm room. He has a great voice and an incredible ear for melody (I am looking forward to finally learning Setswana this year so I can understand what he is singing!).

Eshinee and I left the

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Rob records a demo of a new song with Ntirelang Berman at the ELCB music workshop.

# Holidays

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workshop a day early to be at an ELCB Christmas dinner in Francistown (on the other side of the country) and then travel on to Botswana Music Camp the following day. Ntirelang and Edward, one of the guitar students, rode back with us to Francistown. Edward had never played guitar before this week. He had challenged himself to learn at least one song on the guitar that he could share with his congregation at this Christmas dinner. He and Ntirelang performed a guitar duet for the congregation in Francistown.

Music Camp was held in Gaborone, the capital city, this year. Last year's camp was a highlight of the year for Eshinee and me. I've never seen anything in the world like this. For a week, students of all ages (those under 16 need a guardian present) come together to learn pop, classical, and traditional music from world-class teachers. Eshinee studied marimba with a marimba expert from Zimbabwe. She is hoping to get the chance to put her new skills to use in church—the Lutheran church in our new base of operations, Maun, has a marimba set (note: new Maun postal address in our contact information below). I studied African drumming with a PhD candidate specialist in "Modern Classical African Drumming" from South Africa. We performed together and separately on "Student Night," as well as showcasing our skills at a final performance attended by people from all over the country. It was a great opportunity for us to learn about the musical culture of the area and meet the most influential musicians in the country.

## Contributions & Correspondence

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# The financial report

There is a cafe in Gaborone where we stop to get email. A sports bar by night, they have large TVs which play BBC

news by day. It was in this cafe where we first saw the phrase "Global Financial Crisis" running along the bottom of a TV screen.

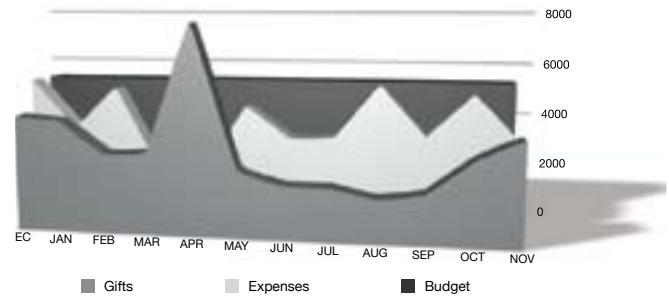
It is difficult to talk about *our* financial situation, knowing that some of you may be struggling with uncertainty in these times.

The "bottom line" for us this last year is that we budgeted \$65,745 for the year of 2008. This was to cover everything from rent, to taxes, to insurance (exact line items will be made available to supporters on request). We received about half of that in donations. As of our end of year report, we had raised 39,677 of our budget. Normally, this would be cause for alarm. Well, it is cause for alarm, but not as bad as it could be. By our itinerant lifestyle, we kept our expenses to \$42,063, as of November. The good news is that we stayed well under budget. The bad news is that we are well over what we have received.

2009's budget is about the same as 2008, even with an increased local cost of living; we tried to cut where we could. We will be using our vehicle fund, for example—a newer car will significantly reduce our vehicle maintenance and gas expenses. However, we have to establish a home base and office this year, which is pretty much an unchangeable expense.

The chart contains a month by month report of what we budgeted, what we received, and what we spent.

Thank you to all who have faithfully supported us this past year, in prayer and finances. We could not do this without you.



## Pray for us

- for *Safety* and *Health* as we minister in Botswana. Maun is a malaria area and this is the rainy season. Also, there has been a recent increase in local crime against tourists. This is of some concern for us as we are occasionally mistaken for tourists, which is understandable given that we don't look Batswana.
- for *Our Car*. We still need \$4500 to fill up our car fund.
- for *Increased Support*, in prayer and finances in 2009.
- for *Things to Come Together* for what looks like a complicated schedule in 2009.