



Far Trekkin'



News from Rob and Eshinee Veith

Volume 5, Issue 4

April/May, 2009

Adventures in Setswana liturgy

by Rob

Last year, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana (ELCB) music committee spoke to me about various projects that they had on their agenda which hadn't gone forward because the right people weren't available. One of these projects, an indigenous liturgy in Setswana (the official language of Botswana), had been waiting for someone to record it. This liturgy powerfully mixes the distinctive rhythms and harmonies traditional in this country with the familiar words and melodies which evoke Lutheran hymn traditions. It is at once completely indigenous while blending easily with the existing (mostly imported) church music used every Sunday. Completed in early 2007, this liturgy has been used for several years, has been taught in workshops around the country, and exists in sheet music form. The ELCB music committee has wanted a recording as a teaching tool (for people who learn music by ear) and as a means to present the liturgy to congregations who haven't heard it yet.

The recording, poised to be a monumental undertaking, almost fell apart before it could start. The committee recruited sixteen of the best Lutheran singers from around

the country and booked the best "live room" available (the chapel at Woodpecker Seminary, just outside of Gaborone), and recruited me to produce the recording. The plan was to gather on Friday, rehearse all day and record on Saturday, then do any finishing touches on Sunday, after a short worship service.

Woodpecker is about a 12 hour drive from Maun, so Eshinee and I decided to make the trip in two days, staying overnight with colleagues in Francistown. However, on Thursday I got food poisoning and couldn't travel on Friday at all. Meanwhile, the committee learned that the live room had been booked Saturday morning. Learning I wouldn't be there until Saturday afternoon, they planned to shift the recordings into the late afternoon and do more on Sunday.

Saturday, I felt strong enough to drive, though still weak. We stopped at a gas station 200km out of the capital, in a village called Mahalapye thinking that we could probably make it on the gas we had left, but why risk it? The station had no gas, unfortunately. But because of that, they spent more time washing the windows and checking our oil... and they noticed a massive oil leak.

Daniel, the only local mechanic working on Saturday was called. He took the car back to his shop and, after a quick examination, found that something had broken in the undercarriage of the car. A quick fix—if he could find the part. He rushed around town to the various parts places, knowing that most of the country closes down at noon on Saturday. If he couldn't find the part by noon, he would have to wait until Monday—which would mean missing the recording session entirely.

While Daniel searched for a part, we sat in broken chairs in the dirt lot outside his spartan office trying to find a bit of shade. The air had become hot and humid. Lightning flashed across the sky in the distance. A big storm was coming. I thought about how a rainstorm on a metal roof could ruin a recording and prayed the rain would hold off until the liturgy was recorded. It didn't occur to me that the mechanic wouldn't find the part until he returned and told us everywhere had closed for the weekend and he hadn't managed to find it. We asked about rental car places so we could continue our trip. Then, learning there were none, we asked about accommodations.

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Home at last

by Rob

When we were appointed to LBT just over four years ago, Eshinee and I left our home in Redmond, Washington with only what we could fit into our Cavalier convertible and a friend's minivan. Since then we have lived in fourteen different places—from renting furnished housing near training facilities, to dorm rooms (separate accommodations), house sitting gigs, and the hospitality of friends and family. Now, at last, we have our home that will be our base of operations for the next few years.

Maun housing is hard to come by. Recently the airport was expanded, displacing hundreds of people. Most people in Maun work for one of several major organizations, such as the university or the airport. These organizations get their pick of houses before they hit the market.

Therefore, most of the places we saw were the unliveable leftovers. For example, we were shown a house which had literally burned out. Squatters were living in the concrete remains. The landlord said, "If you pay your rent a year in advance, we can start remodeling." Another one had the problem that the kitchen had been eaten by termites. The owner was putting all new fixtures in and expected to be done in a few months.

Then, with less than a week to go before we had nowhere, we got a call, "I think I have found the place for you." We moved into the new place with a day to spare.

It's great to be settled, great to sleep in one's own bed. We look forward to putting down ministry roots and connecting with people in this community. As I write this, we have just started our lessons in Setswana.

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Liturgy

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Again, there was nothing in Mahalapye.

I called Maria, the director of the music committee, to tell her our dilemma. She told me that both Puso Phetwe and Albert Mosime, the composers of the liturgy who were going to conduct the choir during the recordings, were also ill. One of them had gone home to rest. Then she told me how much everyone wanted to do this recording. She would drive out to Mahalapye, get us and bring us back. Otherwise, who knows when we could get this same group of people together again?

It took two hours to get to the village and two hours again to return to the seminary. We arrived in time for a late supper. Everyone had decided that, in order to finish the project over the course of the weekend, we would have to record late into Saturday night. Puso would not be able to return on Sunday. He had rested during the afternoon and taken cold medicine so he thought he would be able to conduct.

It was still hot and humid, but the rain had not yet started as I unpacked my recording gear... only to

realize that I had left my primary digital recorder behind (probably in the back of the truck at the repair place, as we hastily grabbed our things). However, those who know my methods know I always pack a redundant setup as a defense against Murphy's Law. This time, I had the hand-held recorder I recently used to record demo tracks at the last ELCB workshop.

We recorded until late Saturday night, until all of Puso's compositions had been recorded. Everyone was exhausted, but still in good voice. We still had half of the music to go. We went to bed hoping that Albert would be in good enough health to direct the choir in the morning.

He was and we finished the 24th piece with fifteen minutes to spare before people needed to leave to catch busses back home.

As the first group left for the busses and I packed up my gear, the rain finally started.

The music is beautiful and the group sounds great. *Please pray that these songs enrich the lives and strengthen the worship of Setswana-speaking Lutherans throughout Botswana.*

Pray for us

- for *Housing*. Thank God that we have a place to live.
- for *Our Car*. We only need \$664 to fill up our car fund.
- for *Increased Support*, in prayer and finances in 2009.
- for *Wisdom* as we learn a new language and balance our scheduled language learning with other work projects.