



Far Trekkin'



News from Rob and Eshinee Veith

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Out of the Cracks: fun project opens discipleship doors

by Rob

It was over two years ago; Eshinee's mandate was clear: she had a book of Bible stories to check. There were no plans, however, for what I would do while we lived in the village of Gabane.

I first met Rev. William Sechele at the Lutheran Church in Gaborone. He was one of the pastors of the church. That first Sunday, he sang a song and Eshinee said to me, "He has a nice voice. It would be fun to do something with him someday."

The next time I saw him, I repeated what Eshinee had said and invited him to come out to our house and see the studio I was setting up in the loft. Maybe he could record that song he had sung in church.

Ironically, William visited the same day as the cobra. Remember the Cobra?

The second time he visited, he had a guitar under one arm and a keyboard under the other. He didn't want to just record one song; he wanted to record a whole CD.

William told me that at the point he had gotten serious about his relationship with the Lord, the music which had really spoken to him had

been contemporary Christian rock—Third Day, Lincoln Brewster, Hillsong. No one in Botswana knew what he was talking about, he said, but could I help him make his songs in this style? I said yes; I'd been playing contemporary Christian music since before they called it CCM.

I have to say at this point that as a vernacular media specialist and ethnomusicologist, I see my ministry role as putting Scripture into indigenous art forms for the purpose of more meaningful worship, evangelism, and discipleship. Since William's project wasn't straight Scripture, didn't use indigenous styles (and, aside from one song, wasn't even in a language of Botswana), I never thought of it as my "work," but more as a fun side project.

Whenever William had a break from school or preaching and I had a break from my official projects, he would come to wherever I was (often taking the 10 hour bus trip to Maun in the later months) to work on the CD. I handed the master copy to him after a year of off and on work.

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How can I hear the music Rob has recorded?

I have often been asked by our supporters in the USA how they can hear the recordings I have made in Botswana. I have wanted to share my work with you all, but it has been a bit of a challenge since I am not involved with the duplication and distribution of materials. Instead, I work with the artists to empower them to reproduce and distribute their work. This often means that I have to buy copies of the CDs I produce in the shop like everyone else.

The good news is that three of the projects with which I have been involved are available online from the SoundClick site. I hope you'll be able to check them out sometime and perhaps purchase a download. Profits for CD sales go back to the artists so help them fund future work.

In most cases, you can listen to all of the songs for free. Then you can download individual songs or whole albums.

Kenny Williams: *Out of the Cracks* is the debut of Botswana's premier CCM artist (more on this project elsewhere in this newsletter). In addition to Kenny's vocals, guitar, and keyboards, you can hear me on guitar and bass and Eshinee as a vocalist and percussionist. http://www.soundclick.com/bands/kenny_williams.

The Naro Choir of D'kar: *Ncamku* and *Core*. Both CDs feature the choir's distinctive southern Africa vocal harmonies. The debut, *Core*, was recorded by me, while *Ncamku* features some outtakes from the first disc and new recordings. <http://www.soundclick.com/bands/narochoirofdkar>.

Cracks

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While I liked how the CD turned out, I thought, as William had said, that the people of Botswana may not be into this music and probably won't accept it.

William is an ambitious fellow, though. After establishing the stage name of Kenny Williams, he contracted with a graphic designer to make a cover, with a duplication service to get copies made, and with a videographer to shoot music videos. He has been performing the CD all over the country, selling out then making more. The video has been shown on national TV. He has been interviewed on the radio.

To me, these things are less significant than two things which happened right before Eshinee and I returned to the US.

While I was recording the annual ELCB choral festival, as I do as a part of my work with the Lutheran church, I realized some of the choirs were singing William's songs! Someone then told me that almost all of the church music here comes from somewhere else. Even the Setswana songs are imported from South Africa. William is one of the first of "our own" writing music for the church.

Later, while I was teaching at a workshop in the remote village of Werda, I was asked to help the advanced guitar students. I asked the students what they wanted to learn. Country music, they told me: Dolly Parton and Bryan Adams. Bob Dylan. And Christian music. They all knew the Kenny Williams album and wanted to make music like that. William, also teaching at this workshop, composed a new song, which was performed for everyone by my class at the end of the workshop.

William told me that people are often approaching him and asking him, "How did you do this?" People love this type of music, but thought no one from Botswana could make it. He told me, "I don't tell them about you. Not yet." Right now, he said, they hear the sound of the music and they like it. But they don't have a vision for how these songs can enrich the Church. He said he would help them find that vision and when they were ready, he would let me know.

Our home ministry schedule: connecting with YOU

We are currently scheduling our partnership development for North America. Sunday morning events are filling up rapidly, though there are still a few open Sundays. We are also very interested in making connection on a smaller, more personal level. One of our goals this trip is to spend some time with the people who are making this ministry possible, especially with many of you whom we have had very little personal interaction so far. For example, if you have been reading this newsletter and want an opportunity to get together for a one-on-one report, we would welcome that. If your small group (women's league, men's breakfast, prayer team, etc.) has been supporting us already or might be interested in meeting us and getting a taste of what we do, book us to visit a meeting when we're in your neck of the woods this summer and fall. Please call (360.566.2252) or email (REV-eith@LBT.org) to connect.

Our Schedule:

June 5: Eshinee's graduation

June 25-26: Linguistics conference in Eugene, OR.

June 28 to July 1: at the LBT head office, Aurora, IL.

July 9 to 26: New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (Sundays are full, but many weekdays are still open)

August: Pacific Northwest (British Columbia, Washington, Oregon. Many dates are still open)

September: Washington, Idaho (Sundays are full; some weekday availability)

October: Washington and Oregon (still mostly open)

November: California (still mostly open)

December: with our home church in Bellevue, WA.

January: Lord willing, back to Botswana

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