



# Far Trekkin'

*News from Rob and Eshinee Veith*

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## Mark in Shiyeyi!

By Eshinee

Keene Moopi, one of the Shiyeyi language Bible translators, is pictured here holding the newly printed Gospel of Mark in Shiyeyi, which is displayed in a traditional woven basket on a bed of grain. Rev. Carl Grulke took this picture on March 19, 2021 at the dedication ceremony.

Thanks be to God for Keene and Motswasele, Baseki Baloyi (the new project exegete), Rev. Carl and Kelsey Grulke (LBT missionaries who are helping them), the Bible Society of Botswana, and all the Wayeyi who are continuing to work hard to hear God's Word spoken in the Shiyeyi language. And thank you for being a part of this Bible translation story, particularly in your support of the role that I was privileged to play in it for a time. Though this project is out of my hands, it will always be in my heart.

## Virtual Presence

By Eshinee

My last work trip was in February 2020. Our awareness of COVID-19 at that time was on the rise, but we were all still kind of thinking of it as something that was happening somewhere else. So off I went to Ethiopia, to attend the annual EECMY mission partner gathering and to check in with folks in the seminary Bible translation training program.

Not long after returning from Ethiopia, it became clear that not only was COVID here... it was everywhere. Flights were cancelled. Hotel bookings were unmade. A year that was going to have been packed with busy-ness suddenly became very still.

In the early days of the pandemic, there were quite a few Zoom meetings in which people simply attempted to process what all of this was going to mean for our work. During one of these meetings, LBT colleague Nathan Esala said something that has stuck with me all year. He said that it may feel to some like we're living in some kind of post-apocalyptic world. Then he pointed out that the word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek word *apocalupsis*, which means "reveal". There are aspects of our world and work that have been there all along, but we have been unable to focus on them or, in some cases, even perceive them until something happens that unveils them. He suggested that we should keep our eyes open and see what this time might reveal to us.

Here are a few of the "revelettes" that I am taking away from this past year:

- **I can write more if I'm not traveling all the time.** Seriously. While there are some things that can only happen on-the-road and via in-person meetings, writing is not one of them. I was keenly aware this year how many more days I was able to focus on research and document production because I wasn't packing, traveling, and recovering from travel. This included a 15,000 word collection of Bible translation (hi)stories with reflection questions that will be used in a course for the developing Digital Training Library for Bible translators ([www.digitaltraininglibrary.org](http://www.digitaltraininglibrary.org)).

Continued next page.

# 2020 in review

By Rob

We usually write to you when we have something newsworthy to report... a project we have worked on, a conference we attended. But, most of our work lately has involved a lot of staring at laptop screens but very few newsletter-worthy photo ops.

It was about this time last year that we saw all of our travel plans—and all on-site project work—cancelled or postponed. Subsequently, most of our work has moved virtually. Eshinee has been heavily involved with the creation of a Digital Training Library for Bible Translators in partnership with Fuller Seminary since the beginning of 2020. Last fall, I received a generous scholarship to begin a PhD in World Arts at Dallas International University. In January, we spent a week in virtual meetings as a part of LBT's International Program Ministries Team. I spent February facilitating an online course called Vibrant Communities of Jesus Followers Through the Arts in partnership with Operation Mobilization.

Even though we couldn't be physically present with our partners in other countries, they kept working. Some of our national partners have hit milestones with minimal involvement from us this year. Most significantly, the folks I trained in audio recording during trips to Namibia in 2018 and 2019 completed audio Children's Bibles in four languages. I served as mastering engineer for the final recordings. The Wayeyi Bible Translation project—now being led by one of the translators of the Kalanga Bible in Botswana—just published the Gospel of Mark. It was dedicated on March 19... the first full book of the Bible to be published in the Shiyeyi language!

So God is still at work, and His work to have His Word spoken in every language and nation has continued, though we sometimes feel a bit distant from it because of the physical distance. Thanks be to God, there are hints—I am cautiously optimistic—that some semblance of normalcy will return in the near future.



## Virtual Presence

(Continued)

- **Being forced to change my goals can help me discover new ones.** It became clear in the early spring that the annual missionary training event in Concordia, MO that I have been helping to organize for the last few years was not going to be happening in-person. So we redirected. We figured out how to deliver content online. And I discovered that having everything online made it possible for people to be involved in the event that might not have been able to otherwise, even on other continents. Because...
- **Virtual engagement can increase global access to training opportunities.** This lesson is one that many Bible translation organizations learned the hard way this year. While some conferences that had been scheduled early in the year were cancelled outright, others quickly realized that online was going to be the only option. As a result, as the year progressed, I began to hear of more and more conferences and trainings that were happening online, many of which would have normally required hundreds—sometimes thousands!—of dollars to attend.

It has been a year now since Rob and I have been grounded—like pilots that aren't allowed to fly, not like teenagers that are being punished for bad behavior. (Though I must admit, some of the emotional upheaval I've experienced over the past year has been a bit too reminiscent of the instability of high school for my liking.) But even though we haven't been able to be physically present with 99% of the people we know and love, we have been shown new ways to be virtually present with the body of Christ, both here in our community and around the world. God, by his grace and in His rich mercy and love, raises up new ministry plans from the rubble of the old, and brings us together... in Christ, in virtual places (Ephesians 2:4-6).