



# Far Trekkin'

*News from Rob and Eshinee Veith*

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## **Our last trip to Ethiopia in 2019**

By Rob

In July of last year, I met representatives from the Mekane Yesus seminary. They encouraged me to join Eshinee on her trip to the seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November. Eshinee travels to Ethiopia several times a year. In November, she would be in the country for three weeks with three major goals: 1) to recruit additional teachers for the Bible Translation track at the seminary, 2) to check on the program as it has been progressing through the first few semesters, and 3) to teach a few of the classes.

The folks we met with in July believed I could also be of service to the seminary. In the same way that the Bible Translation track benefited from Eshinee's assistance, their School of Music might benefit from mine. But these synergies would be best discovered in a personal visit. So, while Eshinee arrived with a busy schedule, I arrived without a formal agenda.

I met with the director of the music school. He asked me to consider teaching a course in ethnomusicology in the future. Actually, he asked if I would do it the week after I arrived, but I did not think I would be able to teach a course without time to prep.

I did agree to teach a master class in live sound mixing for the worship students. The content would be very similar to a session I had prepared last year for the East Africa Media Forum in Tanzania.

I also produced a live recording for the jazz music students.

We aren't sure when we will be able to travel to Ethiopia again.

## **It's all different now**

By Rob

In my last newsletter, I wrote about how "adventure" comes out of things not going as planned. A number of people told me how much they had appreciated this message.

I never in my wildest dreams thought we—all of us—would be living one of these adventures only a few weeks later.

Since the last time you heard from Eshinee and me, we've gone to the Bible Translation Conference in Dallas (October), to Ethiopia (November, see sidebar), to our head office for the annual strategy meetings with the International Program Ministries Team (a regular event for Eshinee, my first time to be invited, January). We moved to a new house at the end of January. The new place is in our favorite neighborhood in Bellingham. It has a lot of natural light and nice home-office space for both of us.

In the last Saturday of February and the first Saturday of March, I conducted Scripture song composition seminar here in Bellingham, Washington. This is the second time I've done this for a church in the US and it brings me great joy. This church has a monthly memory verse. At the seminar, participants attempt

to create new songs to help us learn the memory verses. The March verse came from Romans 12: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." The person who composed the song had never composed a song before. We were all so excited that we wanted to do it the next morning at church, scrambling to put lead sheets together for the worship team. In the end, we didn't have materials ready in time, but that was okay; there were five Sundays in March... we would have plenty of other opportunities to sing the memory verse.

Little did we know then that the church would only hold one more service in person before the pandemic called a halt to all such gatherings.

I wrote the an early draft of this newsletter in early February, just leaving a space for a report on the Bellingham seminar. In that first draft, I requested prayer for a very full first half of 2020. In March, Eshinee and I would go to Thailand. I would teach a course in Ethnoarts; Eshinee would be taking a course in e-

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# It's all different now...

Continued



Above: three digital CDs released by Shtëpia Records in Kosovo containing professional recordings of songs developed in my workshops.

Email me for translations of the lyrics.

learning. In April we would go to Greece to represent LBT at the Forum of Bible Agencies International (Eshinee in the Translation committee and me in the Scripture Engagement).

In June, I would return to Kosovo, then go immediately to Bangladesh to conduct song composition workshops. In July, we would both go to the Concordia Mission Institute (an event Eshinee helps organize each year), then immediately to Dallas for the Global

Consultation on Music in Mission. As of today, only a three day conference in late August called Sing The Scripture remains on my calendar.

I also hoped to spend the latter part of 2020 visiting you all. We build cycles of field work and furlough into the mission life. In the former, we live and work in a foreign country. In the latter, we return to our country of origin to, among other things, report on the work in the field to our

partners. Eshinee and I returned to the US just over two years ago after an extended time in Botswana. We intended to visit our supporting churches after relocating, since we had not seen most of you since 2013. Soon after returning to the US, however, I took a part time job at a local church which meant I could not get away easily for weekends. Eshinee continued to work full time for LBT as the training coordinator. I scheduled three months at the end of 2020 to visit our supporters up and down the west coast. The newsletter I wrote in February contained an invitation to connect in person.

The last few weeks have been hard. I was really excited about this year. When plans fall apart, it can be hard to see God at work. My earlier draft of this newsletter was positively giddy. Eshinee and I were going to be in Greece for Orthodox Easter, then on vacation in Israel for Christmas. Now, we hope we'll still be able to go to the grocery store in the coming weeks.

Welcome to the adventure.

It is hard to see God at work at this stage of an adventure, but I know he is. From experience. From seeing these adventures through to the end in the past.

I don't always have the opportunity to follow up on projects I've done. Here's some good news about the things you've prayed for and invested in:

In Namibia, the audio New Testament in the

Khoekhoegowab language has been completed and is ready to be released when the full Bible is launched. About this time last year, I made my last trip to Namibia. Since then, Kalla and Valerie have done most of the work. They continue to work on recording the Old Testament as they have available time and funding. They have also recorded a Children's Bible in four languages which I mastered from my Washington studio.

In Kosovo, Shtëpia Records has continued to develop material from our workshop last year. The first of two planned albums of children's songs was released in September with a Christmas single following a few months later. You can stream or download the songs from their Bandcamp page (<https://shtepiarecords.bandcamp.com/>). Look for the Juju Kids covers (pictured left). The album Tingujt e Zembrës contains songs from the previous year's workshop. Even though the kids clubs for which these songs were composed cannot meet, children have access to the message of love and hope in Jesus through these recordings.

Even while most of us are locked down or socially distanced, God is not locked down, God is not distant.

May God give you that sense of peace in the midst of adventure. May he give you the energy to endure. May he bless you with health and safety. And when all of this is over, let's get together.