



Lutheran Bible
Translators

FAR TREKKIN'

News from Rob and Eshinee Veith

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Top: All participants. The weekend seminar group met the weekday seminar group on the final day to share everything that had been composed. And we took this picture together.

Bottom: Recording a demo with "Group E." Left to Right: Keikantsemang Betshobakae, Onalethuso Mahudinga (back to camera), Kenneth V. Tjetjoo, and Tshwaraganang Tjetjoo. They composed a song based on 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 that says (translation), "This light affliction is preparing for us/an eternal light of glory beyond all comparison. Though our outer self is wasting away, the inner man is always renewed."

SONGS OF HOPE AND COMFORT

By Rob

As you know, Eshinee and I lived in Maun, Botswana from 2007 to 2017. Maun lies in the northwestern part of the country between the Okavango Delta and the Kalahari Desert. After moving back to the US, we assumed we would have cause to visit every few years. However, except for a visit in 2018, neither of us managed to return (for a variety of reasons) until June of this year.

The Bible Society of Botswana published the Shekgalagari New Testament last year. The translation team, based in Maun, invited me to lead a series of song composition seminars on themes of comfort and hope. This would be one of a planned efforts to encourage engagement with the Scriptures in a meaningful way.

Twenty two people attended the two events, one which was a weekend (Friday to Sunday) event and another which occurred Monday through Friday in the late afternoon (for people who were working). The group included Pontsho Mosweu and Tshwaraganang Tjetjoo (who translated the Shekgalagari New Testament) and LBT

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missionaries Carl and Kelsey Grulke.

I coached them through a process of song creation rooted in an ancient Scripture engagement practice called *Lectio Divina*, or “divine reading,” which encourages an intentional, meditative reading of Scripture, times of prayer and contemplation, and composition of new songs around the words. The words would be adapted to fit the requirements of local song structures, but participants were encouraged to stick close to the meaning they found in the Word. My friend Albert Mosime, a music leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Botswana, also encouraged people to make sure the mood of the music fit the emotional content of the passages from which they were writing songs.

For many, this was a new way to create a song—even for those who had previous songwriting experience. Onalethuso Mahudinga told me writing this way has, “rekindled the creative spark within me. I have had a writer’s block for a couple of years, but now after only a couple of days my head is overflowing with ideas.” Songs he started as a “riff and a mood,” can now find lyrics from the Word, “Even songs that I started writing a long time ago, I feel like I can complete with ease now.” On Sunday after the final event, Keikantsemang Betshobakae told Carl and I, “I want to do this again and again.”

I left encouraged. I love leading these sorts of seminars. There’s so much joy for me to be in the room when a new song comes to life. I hear the Scripture in a new way. At the same time, it’s doubly exciting to see this event as the beginning of something rather than an anomaly. Lord, let this truly be something done again and again.

I also had some encouraging conversations with other folks which may lead to future projects... different language communities, different song themes. If the Lord opens those doors, I will plan to travel through them.

Top right: “Group A” (pictured here Oratile Sehularo, Otshedile Setumo, Lebogang Disho, and Kagiso Mahale) create a song in a contemporary choral style on 1 Corinthians 13:13. “There are three things left: Faith, hope, and love. But the greatest is love.”

Middle right: “Group D” (Segametsi Sejakgomo, Suzan Boreje, and Keontshitse Boreje). At the end of each session, groups were encouraged to share their work in progress. Also working from Corinthians 13:13, they composed a song that has the vibe of the classic local hymns.

Bottom: Some old friends of mine joined during the weekdays. That’s Albert Mosime on the left and Olebetse Motlamme on the right. While both musicians and songwriters in their own right, they spent most of their energy adding their voices and ideas to the other songs being composed. Motlamme had an idea which he never quite finished in the time we had. Mosime helped him with the chords and arrangement.



ABOUT US

Rob serves as LBT’s Ethnodoxologist.

Eshinee is LBT’s Director of Collaborative Innovation, providing a central point of contact for employees seeking innovative strategies, resources, or support.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Lutheran Bible Translators

PO Box 789

Concordia, MO 64020

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