



Lutheran Bible
Translators

FAR TREKKIN'

News from Rob and Eshinee Veith

Volume 21
Issue 3
2025

I GET TO BE THERE WHEN IT HAPPENS

By Rob

Every time I work with a new group of people—especially in a new country—there can be a sense of reinventing the wheel. Every project gets contextualized, sometimes it feels like I'm doing this contextualization on the fly... like I'm making it up as I go along. Just as the communities that I work with have their own languages and art forms, they also have their own priorities, ways of working together, and motivations for creating indigenous Christian art. Every project is a process of discovery involving a community to identify the goals they hope to achieve through sacred arts creation such as Scripture songwriting. Only then can they determine what would help them work together towards that goal.

Sound exciting? Leaps of faith into the unknown generally are. The thing is a leap is still a leap, even if you've made the jump a thousand times before. There's a reason people scream on roller coasters. There's also a reason we keep going back for another loop around the track.

My recent ministry trip to both Egypt and Ethiopia was a complex trip with many moving parts and partners, most of whom I had never met before. Being a part of what God is doing in the world can often feel like being along for the ride. There are moments where you are inching up an incline, not sure what the drop on the other side of the rise will be like or what's around the bend. There's a lot of trust involved: in the people riding along with you, in the people

operating different parts of the machinery, in the Designer of the ride itself. In my work, this means showing up with a particular set of skills, combining it with skills of others, and holding on to see where God takes us.

I arrived in Cairo in the middle of the night, not knowing the language, the rules of the culture, or even the exact location of my lodging. After finding it and managing a couple of hours of sleep, members of the local Anglican church that was hosting us arrived. They collected my colleague Dave Frincke and I to take us for breakfast at what they promised would be "a place with a nice view." As we sat down for a mix of European and Egyptian dishes overlooking the pyramids and the Sphinx(!!!), I felt as if the Holy Spirit was telling me, "I'm going to do some amazing things this week. Keep your eyes open."

Dave Frincke leads United Adoration, a ministry that partners with local churches around the world to inspire people to welcome God into their creative process, creating new things for His glory in their own language, culture, and context. Dave and I have worked together on a few church-based artist events over the last year or so, including the recent Scripture songwriting work in Mongolia (August). He had invited me to join him in a meeting in Cairo with Archbishop Samy Fawzy Shehata, Bishop of Egypt and Archbishop of Alexandria (a.k.a., the Horn of Africa) for the Anglican Church. During that



Above: Selfie at the Sphinx, just after breakfast.

meeting, we learned about both the archbishop's hunger for new Christian songs in his heart language of Egyptian Arabic and the wealth of creativity currently under-utilized in the local church. We made plans to return for at least one retreat with the Anglican Church of Cairo in 2026.

Other possible opportunities emerged during our time there in Egypt. When our host, Mary-Beth, organized a few outings for us, she invited Anglican church members to come along and fill out the party. Among these were refugees from both Sudan and a country in mainland southeast Asia. When they heard about what we do, one of them, a church leader, took us to lunch. While sharing many delicious dishes from her region, she talked with us about possibilities for creative work among her displaced community there in Egypt.

From Cairo, Dave and I flew to Ethiopia for a workshop focused on producing Scripture songs in the Zayse language.

Continued next page.



Top: Songwriters took photographs of Zayse Scripture Texts on a translator's laptop screen for reference.

Middle: On the third day of the Zayse Song Composition Workshop, the participants started teaching each other their songs. Photo by Rebecca Bartelt.

Bottom: I made simple recordings of the new songs so that no one would forget how they went. Photo by Dave Frincke.

While I had visited Ethiopia years ago, this was my first opportunity to work with a local Bible translation team. We planned the workshop on the spot as it started; face-to-face with local leaders, we discovered their dreams and we set the workshop's goals, Scripture focus, and agenda. The Zayse Bible translation team took an active role, leading in the songwriting teams and offering exegetical support to the creators to make sure every song remained true to the Word. They shared their computer screens with workshop participants to read the Zayse New Testament translation, which has been completed but not yet printed. For many of the 16 participants at the workshop, this was their first opportunity to read from the full New Testament text in their own language.

On the third day, I asked the participants about some traditional instruments that I had noticed were in the room but not being used yet. They said that they were focusing on having good words and melodies but that, once the songs were composed, they would find a way to incorporate these instruments. They began to share their songs with one another and think about how the traditional instruments could be incorporated with a larger ensemble. By lunchtime, the four small groups had become one large group, with everyone participating in the creation of every song. By the end of the week, they were ready for me to record nine rich, new songs, four of which were more than 6 minutes long.

The completion of this workshop was a beginning for the participants, not an ending. They planned to continue to create songs together, collaborating through a Telegram group. The translators offered to provide ongoing exegetical support. One man told me that he had two young daughters whom he was going to teach what he had learned this week so that they might grow up holding the Word of God in their hearts through the songs they created from the Scripture. Pastors—there were at least three amongst the participants—now planned to teach their congregants the Bible by teaching them to sing it. Because this workshop took place before publication of the Zayse New Testament, for many in this community, the Word will now enter their language first as songs.

At the end of the workshop, we (the workshop leaders) had dinner with the synod president, translation coordinator, and scripture engagement coordinator for the region, who had all been observing this pilot project with interest. They said there were at least six language communities in their region which would benefit from this sort of activity: how soon could we return?

Please rejoice with me that I got to be a part of what God is doing in Egypt and Ethiopia and please pray for opportunities for future ministry in these and other regions around the world.

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.

Veith ministry is funded through donations by individuals and groups.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Lutheran Bible Translators

PO Box 789

Concordia, MO 64020

Please make checks payable to Lutheran Bible Translators and designate Veith Ministry.

Online giving at
<https://lbt.org/missionary/rob-and-eshinee-veith/>