

Encouraging Word

news from the Rudowske family serving in the ministry of Bible translation

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The Importance of Dialogue by Rich

Lutheran Bible Translators has the following core value statement regarding dialogue: *"We are committed to authentic internal and external relationships. We strive to exhibit mutual accountability, transparency, collaboration, and interdependency in a spirit that is both respectful and compassionate."*

In his book, *Cross Cultural Connections*, Duane Elmer tells a fable about a monkey and a fish. From his perch in a tree, the monkey sees the fish struggling against the current in a rapidly rushing river below him. He decides that he should help the fish. So he goes down to the water's edge, reaches in and pulls out the fish, depositing him safely on dry ground. He then sits back with satisfaction and watches as the fish flops around on the ground, obviously expressing his joy and thanksgiving at the help that he has received from the monkey.

The parallels to mission work are palpable. It is easy for folks from the Western world to see and diagnose a problem from our perspective and go in with solutions to fix it. This is particularly true in our American culture, which highly values efficiency and productivity. But often our solutions are based partially on how we see the world and how we would approach a situation. We don't necessarily recognize that there may be harmful aspects to how we plan to 'help'. Certainly the monkey thought that if he were in the same position as the fish he would want the kind of help he was offering. But it turned out to be deadly for the fish.

So what's the solution? Two way communication, or dialogue, is needed. In today's mission world, there are very few, if any, contexts in the world where as a missionary, you need to go in and blaze a trail to reach unreached people. There is almost always some group or organization in the host country that we can and should partner with in order to work together for the good of the people that we have come to serve. As guests in a new culture, our missionaries are expected to approach their work with a high focus on their need to learn as much as, if not more, than they teach. We strive to enter the contexts in which we work as learners and guests, not teachers and directors.



Rich in dialogue with Bishop Andrew Gulle of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania about potential partnership in language work for the East of Lake Victoria Diocese (photo by Mike Rodewald)

Yet we do come with skills and expertise that our partners are looking for and for which they invited us. The key is that there has to be constant, thoughtful, and transparent dialogue. In the five years that I had the privilege of serving among the Bakgalagari people of Botswana, I spent many hours with a committee of chiefs and pastors visiting the traditional community gathering forums (rikgota) in each village to assess what the churches and community hoped for with respect to development of their language and scripture translation.

In the early days, I usually spoke first and talked at length about what we could do and offer. As time went on, I learned that the first one to speak was often given little respect by the tribe and those who spoke last carried the most weight. I learned to wait, to be quiet and listen. I learned how to dialogue in Shekgalagari culture. Only then could I really learn how to help or even what 'help' was from their perspective.

Dialogue is a core value for Lutheran Bible Translators. Our vision is that the word would be proclaimed to all people. Yet if the gospel is preached but not understood, has it been proclaimed? We can't know how to help people until we first learn how to talk to them as peers, as students, and then, perhaps, as teachers.

On the Move

At the beginning of May, LBT Executive Director Dr. Mike Rodewald announced that the organization will be moving its head office from Aurora, Illinois to Concordia, Missouri. As a result, the Rudowske family is on the move. We are leaving our rented townhouse in Sugar Grove, Illinois and headed to Missouri at the end of May.

We are thankful for the great faculty and staff at St. Luke Lutheran School in Montgomery, Illinois who have invested significantly in our children and helped them make huge strides this school year in their transition from overseas schooling to school in the U.S.

Our family has found a great home in Concordia near Saint Paul's High School campus where the new office will be located and near the church and school where the children will attend starting in late August.

We ask for your prayers that all the inspections and financing will come through ok. We are excited for this next chapter in both our lives and in the lives of the organization as we reposition ourselves for expanded and more effective ministry in the places that the Lord is inviting us to participate in His mission.



The Rudowske family Easter 2015

Gospel of Luke coming soon!

In March, Rich went to Botswana to visit national partners and the Bible Society and to introduce new team members Rob and Mical Hilbert to the Shekgalagari project in Kang. The Hilberts are replacing John Strasen, who has returned to the USA and is retiring at the end of June.

While we were there, we received the good news that the gospel of Luke in Shekgalagari passed its final consultant check and is ready for publishing. I am working with the translators, Pontsho and Tshwaraganang, to make a few final publication edits and it will be printed soon. Later this summer, LBT missionary Rob Veith will visit the project to record Luke and recommend distribution strategy for the recorded text. In addition, he will consult with the project advisory committee to determine what film possibility they want to go with. The committee chose Luke as the first book to be translated back in 2011 because they wanted it to be adapted for the Jesus Film.

We rejoice at this milestone for the Bakgalagari, especially because this is the project that my family and I went to Botswana to help start in 2009. Please join us in praying for the print and media production to go well, for the local churches and leaders to make use of the Luke texts and most of all that God would engage with the Bakgalagari through this scripture in their heart language and that they meet in that word, the Word made flesh.

Pray for Pontsho and Tshwaraganang as they continue to make progress translating 1 Timothy, James, Matthew, and Acts this year. Pray also for Rob, Mical, and their family as they prepare to move to Kang in January 2016.



(March 2015) The privilege of partnership: (above) Mical Hilbert and Rich present a new laptop for the project to advisory committee chairman, Nelson Lekutlane. (below) A crowd of over 70 gathers for testing of 1 Timothy in Hukuntsi, Botswana.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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