

"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

—Philemon 1:6 (NIV)

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## The Value of a Focused Statement

What is your employer or business's mission statement? My guess is that many reading this will not know what it is, or at least not precisely, and even if you do, you may not really care or feel like it intersects with your actual life and the actual work you do at your job. I have to admit that there was a time in my life when I didn't get very excited about mission statements either. In my career path, many of the mission statements at the places I worked were either too complicated to remember or so short and ambiguous that they didn't really matter. The first time I really heard a mission statement that grabbed me was back in 2003 when I first came to an LBT event called IDIOM, an event designed to give people interested in missions a look at the work that LBT does and to see if they might fit into that work. In one of the first presentations, Executive Director Marshall Gillam presented the LBT mission statement, which is "Our mission is to help bring people to faith in Jesus Christ by making the Word of God available to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts". He then spent a fair amount of time dissecting that statement and showing how carefully it had been crafted to put into words what this organization would strive to do and

also what we would strive not to do. For the first time in my professional career I saw the value of having a well-crafted mission statement, one that had some teeth, that defined who we were and who we were not, while leaving some areas open for further explication of what that would look like. For example, 'Making the Word of God available' excludes very good things like 'providing medical support' or 'providing clean water'. There is nothing wrong with those things, but we have chosen to prayerfully leave those and other things to those who feel led to serve in that way. At the same time 'making the Word of God available' is not as explicit as 'providing a printed New Testament' so that we are able to work in dialogue with the people whom we serve and determine what is needed to help them engage the word of God in their heart language. It could be scripture texts, scripture stories, oral recordings, music and liturgy crafted into their vernacular music style, videos, etc. A good mission statement focuses an organization on what it will and will not do while leaving latitude to accomplish the mission in a variety of innovative and context specific ways. So, why do I bring all this up? I am very excited to share the mission statement that was recently developed by the Shekgalagari Bible Translation Project board and how it was crafted (see the article '**Putting it in Words**'). I ask you to join me in praying that it will guide our project in the same way that our organization as a whole is guided by its mission statement. Thanks for your continued partnership.



The family July 2007 (above) and May 2010 (below)



## Reflections on the Missionary Life

July 15 marks one year since we moved to Botswana, but it is also three years since we left our beloved community at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Kettering Ohio to follow where we thought that God was leading – a project in Bible translation with Lutheran Bible Translators. We moved to Dallas Texas for a year of VERY intensive study in linguistics and cultural adaptation among other things. We then moved to Saint Louis and set up a home base there while traveling around the United States to share the vision of Bible translation and ask folks like you to partner with us in prayer, giving, and encouraging this work. Finally, we relocated to Botswana and spent most of the last year learning how to live in a fairly remote village in the Kalahari Desert. This life has not been easy and the challenges of the frequent moving have created an instability that we have worked hard to overcome in our first year in Botswana. When you live in a situation in which your schedule is not dictated from outside your home (eg. office hours, kids' school schedule) and in which basic systems fail (water, electricity), it is easy to lose structure and neglect the important basics such as children's education and family worship time. Thankfully, the Lord has been faithful in helping us find ways to work around problems like electricity and water supply and has guided us to more effectively schedule our lives and provide for ways to accomplish the work we are here to do and to give our family what they need. But we are far from finished with our work here and we are still very uncertain about how we will be able to pull everything off. One thing we are sure about though: God is faithful. He will provide a way for us. Reflecting on the past three years leads us also to thank **CONT. PG2**

## Putting it in Words

Most of the work we are doing in Botswana right now involves mobilization of the community to support a Bible translation project in Shekgalagari. This is necessary because there are churches in the area already. To come in and do a project without their support will lead to the scripture not being used. We are working with a board of pastors and chiefs from the Bakgalagari communities to do this. We discussed how from the beginning we should be clear on the mission of the project, that we should 'put it in words' as they say in their language. On May 3<sup>rd</sup> the board met and crafted this mission statement:

**'Go kywisa go nere phoriso ya lehoqo gya ga Gyeso Keresete mbakyhong ba Bakgalagari qa go thabolola puo ya Shekgalagari.'**

In English it translates: **'To help bring the healing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Bakgalagari people through the development of Shekgalagari language.'** The process of discussion among the board members as the statement was being formulated was fascinating. Some ideas that formed the statement (translated into English): We say **'to help'** because we recognize that there are churches and other organizations at work among the Bakgalagari to spread the gospel. Our goal is



*Shekgalagari Bible Translation Project (SBTP) Board Chairman Rev. Nelson T. Lekutlane (right) speaks to church leaders about the mission of the project at a gathering this spring.*

not to compete with or override these but to come alongside and help. We say **'healing'** because we recognize that in many of our communities things are broken or sick. We say **'the gospel of Jesus Christ'** because there is no other gospel given under any name that can bring the healing we need. We say **'through the development of the Shekgalagari language'** because we recognize that our goal is not a Bible for the sake of having a book, but rather that we would be able to engage with that word of God. This development may include things like scripture in various media, sermon helps for pastors, Sunday School materials, literacy materials and other things. Needless to say this was an exciting discussion to be a part of and to participate with and we praise God for the vision He has given the members of our board and for His blessing on our efforts to begin to connect with the churches and communities to raise awareness of and support for this work.

### WE PRAISE GOD:

- For His faithfulness in our three years of missionary service
- For the formation of the mission statement for the SBTP.
- For safe travel for Rich to and from Kenya.
- For stability and routine

### WE ASK GOD:

- To guide us in learning language and culture here.
- For grace and patience in adapting to our new surroundings.
- For Ranae's residence permit to be finished so she can stay til October.
- To guide the community mobilization plan of the SBTP board.
- For wisdom in all matters.

**REFLECTIONS (CONT. From PG 1)** you for your outpouring of generosity in the form of prayers, support, and encouragement for our family. We ask you as you continue with us on the journey to pray that we would carry out our duties faithfully – both to our children and to the people we have come here to serve. Most of all, we ask you to thank God for the work He has done in us and through us, to thank Him for the opportunities He is giving all of us to participate in His mission. To Him be all glory and in Him we put our trust to work according to His good pleasure.

## Quick Family Updates

**Maya** is managing the home and in her spare time typing information from an 80 year old print document about Bakgalagari history into a new word document to preserve it. **Chris** will be beginning high school through the American School of Correspondence, a school that is over 100 years old designed for American citizens abroad. **Katherine** is finishing up fifth grade and doing very well in reading and writing. She wants to start a business selling drinks and baked goods. **Matt** is finishing up second grade and is very advanced in reading. He likes building elaborate sand villages in the yard. **Josh** celebrated his 7<sup>th</sup> birthday on June 28. He enjoys playing soccer. **Becca** is ready to start kindergarten – she is writing her name and practicing other letters and numbers. Volunteer **Ranae Holdeman** has settled in well and has been very helpful in teaching the older children. She hopes to have her residence permit soon so she can stay until mid-October. **Rich** traveled to Kenya June 19 – July 4 to help teach at a workshop on Communication Principles and Translation Theory. He is busy with the SBTP board and continued language and culture learning.



### CORRESPONDENCE & CONTRIBUTIONS

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