



By Richard and Renee Cook

# Sharing the Hope!

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## Future Hope

After 10 relatively stable family years in Botswana with 6 of our 7 children with us, we are in for a number of changes.

### Change #1 Wedding Bells

Nearly two years ago, Sarah grew weary of the anxiety about finding a spouse, so she spoke to her father asking him to find her someone. If she was no longer looking, she felt she could relax. At first perplexed with just how to go about it, Richard posted a profile for Sarah on the Lutherans Online singles website at the end of our 2004 furlough. He made it clear in the listing that anyone making an inquiry would have to correspond with him, her father, before being permitted to correspond with her. Richard had four key questions to ask the young men to assess their compatibility with Sarah on social, moral and faith issues.

After nearly 20 casual inquiries, one young man made it through all the hoops. Sarah and Neal began corresponding the first of October.

On February 1st, he arrived to visit. On February 7th, Neal asked Richard's permission to ask Sarah to marry him. Richard consented, Neal asked, and Sarah accepted. Praise God with us for bringing these two young people together in His timing.

On June 26 the family will fly to the US for the July 15 wedding. Please pray for the family as we sort things out for the wedding 7000 miles away and as we travel.

### Change #2 Advanced Academics

Before we return to Botswana, John and Emory will begin their college careers in the US. Throughout February and March, the boys were hustling to get all the right paperwork to the three colleges of their choice:

- ◆ Thomas More College of Liberal Arts, Merrimack NH
- ◆ Concordia College, Seward, NE
- ◆ Berea College, Berea, KY **Winner!**

We are now waiting to hear about acceptance and financial aid packages from the schools. We will report additional details in our next communication.

### Change #3 Family Dynamics

When we return to Botswana on August 26 as a family of five, we will not have an empty house. Just four days after our return, Chris LaBoube will arrive for his vicarage year from Concordia Theological Seminary.

Originally, Chris was to stay in the rondoval behind our back yard for which we had initiated the Cook Vicarage Improvement project. But we realized with the exodus of children and with some clever rearranging we had extra room in the house to share with Chris. We saw no reason to spend the extra money in fixing up the rondoval, since Chris will get the second story of our house to himself.

Thus the Cook Vicarage Improvement project is **closed**.

So much change in the very near future! We thank the Lord for His promise of hope in that future as we continue to bring God's Word to the people of Botswana who do not yet have that same hope. ☘

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

*Jeremiah 29:11*

In the midst of radical change with children leaving home, college and a wedding, we long for some stability, something to hang on to for reassurance in the face of an unknown future. What a comfort to know that God has plans for us. Plans that include more than just getting by and surviving. Plans that include thriving and succeeding. That makes the future for each of us a whole lot more appealing. What a future we have to look forward to! A future of hope!

**Please remember  
In your prayers**

✿ **Praise** ✿

*God with us  
for bringing  
Neal and Sarah  
together in  
His timing.*

✿ **Prayer** ✿

*For the completion of  
Emory's high school  
education.*

*For safety as we  
travel to the states for  
the wedding and for  
college careers.*

*For guidance as we  
plan for the future  
needs of the family.*

*For safety in travel as  
Kedra Larsen and  
Richard are on the  
road with the  
media survey.*

*For wisdom in  
discerning new  
opportunities to  
spread God's Word  
in Botswana.*

*Prayer  
Requests*



*The family really had a great time at the southern most point of Africa, Cape Agulhas, where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet. Yep, that's Sarah's fiancé, Neal Reimer, in front of her on the right.*

## Media Survey

Bible translation entails more than transmitting scripture into another language. Translation also means transferring the written scripture into the hands of the language speakers. It means getting people into God's Word in a productive fashion.

We know that His Word changes lives. Thus, the more people are exposed to His Word, the greater opportunity for change to take place. In Botswana, some language groups have had the New Testament but still relatively few people use the Scripture on a regular basis. For example, the Mbukushu have had a New Testament in their language since 1986. Yet in looking at the Bible sales statistics from the Bible Societies and in talking with pastors and leaders of the communities, few people make use of God's Word.

In May, Richard joins with Kedra Larson of LBT to survey the Mbukushu [pronounced Mm boo koo' shoo]. In part we know their low rate of scripture use is from lack of literacy. Many Mbukushu do not know how to read their own language, but other barriers may also exist that prevent them from using the New Testament as much as

they could. Kedra and Richard will conduct a Media Survey among the Mbukushu. They will be visiting seven villages of the Mbukushu in north-western Botswana to learn more about how the people use radio, CD's, storytelling and other media to learn and transmit information. They will also assess how we in LBT can help them in that need.

Pray for safety as they travel. Please pray also for wisdom in discerning new opportunities to spread God's Word in Botswana. ✿

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