



## ***The Future of African Textbook Ministry***

Having worked almost our whole lives for the church, Chery and I are entitled to little in the way of retirement benefits. But if we wait until July 2027, we will be able to collect \$2113 per month of Social Security. When we returned to Africa in March of 2021, we asked for seven-year commitments toward our support. That would have allowed us to stay here until the maximum Social Security benefits started. But very few were able to commit for that long.

Our two largest contributors each made five-year commitments. These will run out at the end of 2025 or early in 2026. We will face a gap of about 16 months in which we will not have enough support to continue. Please pray about this. We are sure that there is someone out there who might leave a legacy gift large enough to cover the shortfall, or a handful of churches and individuals that could band together to cover it. It would be such a shame to abandon this work at the end of next year. We have made good progress, but there is still much to do. If we can manage until July of 2027, we will then need only about \$800 per month (plus our Social Security) to keep going.

"Many hands make light work." If several individuals or congregations would make a commitment for that gap period (of April 2026 to July 2027), I am sure it need not be a major burden to anyone. If some wish to give in advance – sending funds now to be held until needed – that would certainly be helpful.

Please put this in your prayers. And talk about it to anyone you know who might be able to help - even a little bit.

### **What does 'retired' mean?**

You should also be aware that even though we do not plan to draw Social Security until 2027, we may soon be considered retired by the authorities here. In Eswatini, people are expected to retire at 60. It is almost required. Many of them get some kind of retirement job, but they begin taking retirement benefits from their employer at that age.

Because of the newly introduced regulations on churches bringing in missionaries (mentioned in the August newsletter), we have been investigating how we can keep a permit to live here. One path toward doing so will be to ask for a retirement permit. Since we have never taken any pay from any institution in Africa, and since we are well past the standard retirement age for people here, it really makes sense, and we expect it will be approved.

Being declared “retired” will not change our lives. We have plans for handing more of the work over to locals. That has always been the case. Failure to involve local people has been one of the greatest failures of the modern mission movement. Whereas Paul and Barnabas were appointing elders within a matter of months (see Acts 14), many modern mission efforts have gone on for decades without developing native leaders.

So, if you hear that we have “retired,” please be aware what it means. It does NOT mean that we are sitting on the porch watching the grass grow. It means we are still in Africa and still doing what we always do.

### **An example**

As an example of the effort to hand portions of the work over to Africans, let me mention some recent progress on using the audio devices. Several months ago we purchased 10 audio devices that contain a complete SiSwati Bible, and which can be loaded with 30 hours of additional audio material (sermons, leadership classes, or evangelistic messages). The project stalled for a time because we were having difficulty arranging how to load this additional material. We did not have a good location for setting up a recording studio. We also did not have a narrator available to read the material. But the Lord has provided.

A nearby congregation has a spare room that is suitable, and we have identified two brothers who should be able to begin recording lessons to load onto the devices. Although this will not be a fulltime job for these brothers, we do hope to be able to give them some financial help (they are both in need of employment). We are hoping that each of them can devote a day each week to this task. We expect that they gladly accept \$100 per month for this work.

Already we have brothers and sisters requesting that more lessons be loaded onto their devices. Soon we should be able to meet that need and have more people listening to good teaching throughout the week.

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