

The Church of Go

Rick Strickland has traveled the world for Christ. He has slept on tarps, lived in hostile cultures, and walked countless miles through some of the remotest places on Earth. He has seen miracles performed and lives transformed.

But despite all of the adventure—and there has been a lot—much of his life has been spent waiting. Waiting for connections, waiting for funding, waiting faithfully for God.

He traces his calling back to a mission trip to the Soviet Union in 1977. A college student at the time, Rickey knew he wanted to dedicate his life to mission work. So, when he married his wife, Mary, two years later and she was called to go to Africa, he knew it was where they belonged. In 1986, at the age of 30, the Stricklands quit their jobs as teachers and moved to Kenya full time. But when they failed to make the right connections with the right people for sustainable ministry, they were forced to return to the United States.

After much reflection, the Stricklands moved to Kansas City where they worked as teachers and prayed for the road ahead. While their coworkers spent their summer vacations at the pool, the Stricklands spent them back in Africa spreading the Gospel. This continued until 2007 when Rick was called by God to quit his job and move to Kenya, where he was introduced to the Pokots—a primitive, remote tribe of 800,000 people unreached by the Gospel.

When the chief of the Pokots, a Christian, asked the Stricklands to reach his people, they traveled to remote villages to spread the Gospel. Sleeping in tents, they drove as far as they could and then hiked up to 30 miles at a time to reach these communities, often with no distinct trail.

It was around this time that Rick met Bill High of The Signatry on one of his trips back to the States. They discussed the work the Stricklands were doing and their need to start a ministry in Kenya. With the help of The Signatry, the Stricklands started Pokot Now in 2009 and took an innovative approach. Instead of relying on church donations to fund their work, Rick created a Facebook group connected to their fund with The Signatry to raise money. Despite not being backed by a large church, Pokot Now raised the money needed to get started with the help of The Signatry.

The Pokot were resistant to the Bible, but Rick was able to build trust with them over time through their chief. Rick connected with other pastors in the area, and as donations for Pokot Now grew, they took new approaches to discipleship. When they began distributing solar-powered audio Bibles to villages, they were in high demand. Not only did the audio Bibles provide teachings in the Pokots' native languages, they also were a source of entertainment in remote villages where radio and other technologies were unavailable.

Pokot Now caters to the spiritual and physical needs of the Pokot people, especially during times of famine. The ministry provides food, medicine, and clean water, but the end goal is to help the Pokot become self-sufficient. "We receive contributions, but we want to head to the place of self-support," Rick explains. To do this, they use what the Pokot already have. The area is abundant with honey and coffee, so the ministry has helped the Pokot modernize their production. After establishing a market, they now ship the products to other countries as a licensed seller for sustainable income.

With the success of the ministry and the trust built through it, Rick has now become a Pokot Elder. This is a high honor in Pokot culture, and is bestowed for helping their people in times of need. Through Pokot Now's discipleship and humanitarian efforts, nearly 30% of the Pokot people, around 200,000, have been reached with the gospel in the last ten years.

Rick says, "The Signatry has helped us build a vehicle, through our website donation page and our fund, that God has used to bring support at the right time. Using the fund is like building a sailboat and letting God blow on its sails. Having this vehicle with The Signatry allows the average Joe like me to hear a call from God and just go."

While it did not happen quickly or easily, the Stricklands' steadfast faith in God and His timing have allowed them to take the Gospel into places it has never been. Looking back, they did not always understand why their missions were not building momentum, but now they see it was all part of God's plan. "The Pokots have a tremendous respect for elders," says Rick. "I wouldn't have been able to gain their trust as a young man."

Pokot Now is spreading the Gospel and bringing new people to Christ, all while improving their quality of life and easing tensions in a historically violent the area. Donors and partners like The Signatry have played an important role in the ministry, helping to fund initiatives that make a difference.

Take Your Next Steps

The Signatry is passionate about partnering and equipping ministries in their development efforts. We see the big picture. It is more than dollars raised. It is about the Kingdom impact you are creating, and we are here to support your vision. Having helped facilitate over \$2.9 billion in grants to nonprofits since our start in 2000, we are here and ready to serve.

Learn more about the resources we offer to ministries at www.thesignatry.com/ministries From webinars to an online training community to major donor training initiatives, we are for you.

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