

Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3

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Dear friends and family,

If I (Michael) kept a journal, this would be a leaf in it.

September brought us back to the US abruptly. We were not planning on it, but we thought God was leading us in that direction. My mom had been in the hospital and we desired to see her. God answered many prayers, and we were able to see her and be with her for several weeks.

It became a stressful month, filled with ups and downs. Each week felt like a month and time moved in the way it chooses—beyond our comprehension. We got laughs in with my mom, tears, smiles, sleep, and suffering.

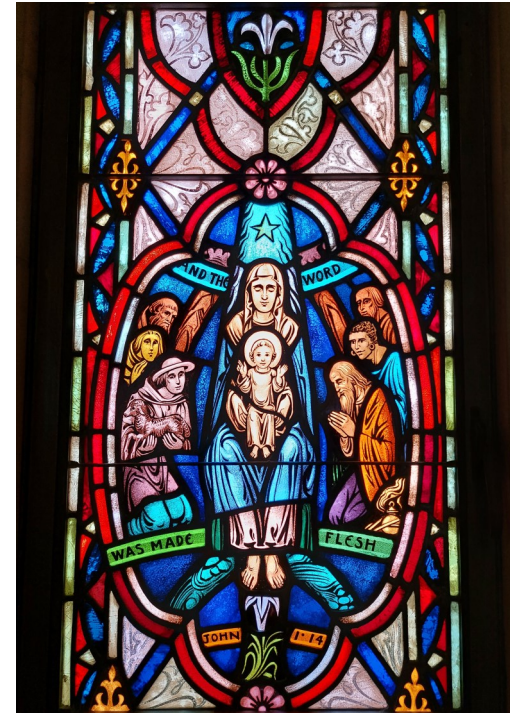
There was time to read Scripture, sing hymns, and pray. When I stop and think about it, I am amazed at how many people were praying for us and for my mom. There were people all over Ghana, the US, and other countries who were praying for my mom. It is an overpowering gift when I think of God and how He builds His church up in such powerful ways.

Many prayers were answered as we hoped, and some were not. However, all prayers were answered according to God's good and gracious will, which we cannot understand. On an Autumn day, God called my mother to her eternal rest until Christ's return.

I was able to be there when she breathed her last. She was not alone. God was with her. From her first breath to her last, God was with her and He is with us and with you.

My mom wrote inside the cover of one of her Bibles, "I want to master this Book, so the Master of this Book can master me." I find inspiration from this quote. It reminds me of the power of God's Word, which transcends time and space. It connects me to truths that have gone through the hearts of countless other people, my mother being one. God's Word is active and powerful, sharper than any sword. May the Master of this book master me.

As I reflect on my mother's death, I also think to several tragic deaths in the Gbintiri community that shook our hearts this year. Heartache is not something we long for, seek out, or desire. It hurts. One of my friends who died was not a Christian. He gladly accepted the audio recording of the Komba New Testament several years ago, as well as the Jesus film in Komba. He challenged me as I grew to learn the language and he would patiently sit and talk with me in market or while I passed his moto and bicycle shop. There would be times I would pass his shop after church to greet him. He would ask me what I heard in church. It challenged me to speak about Jesus and my faith in Komba.



*And the Word was made flesh.
What hope! Jesus knew suffering like us,
so that He could take our eternal death
and replace it with life.
(Picture taken from the hospital chapel.)*





We are thankful that we were able to return to be with Michael's mother before she died. While we mourn her death, we look to the bare, deathly cross and we see it transformed into new life given to us through faith in Jesus, our Savior.

It has been an Autumn we did not expect or predict. It has been filled with sickness, death, transitions, travel, and healing. November is the end of the church year. During this time, we hear in church of the end times. We lift our eyes up with the host of saints who have preceded us in this life and we pray, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." Rev 7:10 In December, we shift our focus to Christ's coming and the life He brings.

While in the US, I have been able to connect a few times with the translation office as we work on standardizing spellings of names in the Old Testament and check Job. I was also able to virtually attend parts of a Bible Translation conference that occurs every two years. I enjoyed these activities. They provided me with time to connect with colleagues, to learn more about the depths of God's Word, and to learn more about Bible translation work. It has been a reminder of how deeply my mom loved Bible translation and people around the world. I am reminded that my village family and the wider Komba community care about me and my family. This work and life is all a two-way street. Missions is never unidirectional.

Thank you for walking alongside us during this time. Thank you for praying for us. We all need God's unending grace and love that is poured out on the cross for us. May God hold you now and may the Master of the Book be with you.

Confident in Christ,
Michael and Naomi Ersland

Prayer Requests

- Praise God for the ability to see mom before she died and for the faith God gave her.
- Praise God that we are never alone.
- Pray for us as we try to team check remotely until arriving in Gbintiri.
- Pray for us as we return to Ghana in December and get back into rhythms.
- Pray for Komba churches as they gather for Christmas convention.
- How may we pray for you? Please let us know so that we may be praying for you!

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