

LBT the messenger

lutheran bible translators
GOD'S WORD
for every language

Christmas in Kombaland

[Staff writer]

Christmas Eve service preparations require putting all the pews outside, right?

“Since we had no electricity in our church, it was brighter—and more beautiful—to have Christmas Eve service outside,” says Sarah Esala. “They’d bring the benches out of the church for people to sit on under the moon and stars.”

Here in the U.S., we all have our own Christmas traditions. Christmas tree. Brightly colored lights. Tinsel and mistletoe and presents. Sunday school programs and special worship services, complete with the singing of beloved Christmas hymns.

Those traditions differ in Ghana, where the culture more closely resembles that of Jesus’ day. “The evening would start out quietly, maybe a dog barking here or



The Komba dance on every important occasion.

there. I’d hear people finishing up meals in nearby homes—they eat in their courtyards—and there would be the murmur of conversations,” Sarah remembers. “Then the drums would start playing, a signal that the service was about to start. Kids would be sent to church first to get them out of the way as their mothers tied up loose ends at home. More and more people would join in as the service went on.”

We find commonality with the Komba people when reading the Nativity story. We each can read and hear the narrative of Jesus’ birth in our own languages.

“In our western setting, we like to leave our Christmas Eve service after singing “Silent Night” and then cherish the quiet. In Ghana, the service builds until people are dancing, and some will dance all night long,” Sarah says. “It’s the tradition among the Komba that marks anything important.

Continued on page 7

⁸Bipeekpaab biba nan be kitir nmon yaan ki kpa a ip ee kunyieg kulorj. ⁹Le Uyudaan a malaka nan degir bi bu. Le Uyudaan nmon a pag a weem wonn bi bu. Le bijawaam nan choo bi takpem. ¹⁰Le malaka nmon bei bi ke, “Ni laa san bijawaami. N dan n nan bei ni tibor nan le, tan li sei bininfob bien nmon. ¹¹Dinan nan Defid a tinjin bi ma ufeerin na, U ma ye Uyudaan Masiya. ¹²Ni li kan kibig nmon kaah pob likinkenlin, ki do tiwankor kaah ji kubulunkporj kan yaan ni. Ni ma li ye limagil ki sei ni.”
¹³Iyaayoo nmon le malakam takpem nan nyan paab ki jiiirin ki nan kpie malaka n bu ki pagir Uwonbor ke,
¹⁴“Kupag ye Uwonbor wan be paab nan a yaan le.
Nposoon li be dulinya nan a ninfob ban bu wee U nyoor be-n.”
¹⁵Le malakam nin nan foor bipeekpaab nan ban, ki jir don papaab. Le bipeekpaab nan bei tab ke, “Ni che ti jo Betiliham ki tan lig niwaan nan tun, wee ti Yudaau Uwonbor bei ti nan.”
¹⁶Ni ma bu le bi nan fii weem weem ki jon tan foo ki kan Meri nin Josef; le kibilieng n mu do kubulunkporj n-yaan poolin. ¹⁷Baah nan tan foo ki kan u nan, le bi bei bininfob Uwonbor a malakam kaah bei bi man, ki jiiin kibig nmon paam, ¹⁸le baah nan gbir bipeekpaab nan kaah len man nin, le ni gar bi bien. ¹⁹Amaa Meri ma nan tier nan nan tun nmon bien, ki rjmag ni u sufu ni. ²⁰Ni boon bu le bipeekpaab nan nan jir bi pee ban kulorjin. Baah nan chaa jir nmon le bi nan pagir ki donn Uwonbor a yinl, nin baah kan ki gbir nan bien nin bu; le ni sin ye le ke malaka kaah bei bi man nin.

Lug 2:8-20

inside

- “Faithful to My Calling”2
- The Next Generation3
- Eating in Nyangatom3
- Willing Spirits4
- Voter Registration Coming Soon!4
- A Christmas Story5
- Sweet Imagery6

“Faithful to My Calling”

Nurturing Your Investment in Bible Translation

[Staff writer]

YOU’VE INVESTED a lot in Lutheran Bible Translators. Some of you have entrusted us with your own daughters and sons, your nieces and nephews, your grandchildren. Some have entrusted their hard-earned cash. Many spend time in prayer.

We don’t take it for granted.

As mission leaders, we want to be good stewards of your gifts. And we want to show care and attention to those who serve so they are able to perform their ministry to the fullest of their abilities. Toward that end Lutheran Bible Translators cohosted the Concordia Mission Institute (CMI) in July under the theme of “Faithful to My Calling.”

Staff, missionaries and mission partner Mission of Christ Network (MCN) gathered on the campus of Saint Paul Lutheran High School near our offices in Concordia, Missouri, to participate. They ranged from missionary kids to instructors from prestigious educational institutions.

Equipping and revitalization sessions and other activities were designed to develop relationships and skills. People shared, supported and encouraged one another so that all might be better prepared to serve our Lord in their respective ministries. One attendee commented that it “built up our culture of kindness, love, and mutual desire for growth.”

Whether a translator working overseas, a mission partner teaching English as a second language, or a staff member here in the U.S., all had their own experiences to share. In many cases, participants discovered common frustrations and concerns, as well as solutions and coping mechanisms relevant for all.

“This event is amazing, and I’m proud of Lutheran Bible Translators for making the huge effort to bring us together for a time of community building, education, and renewal,” said Sarah Esala from the member care team.

The foundation for being faithful to my calling is that God has first been faithful to us. *The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:24.* Thanks to all of you who are faithful to your calling to pray for, encourage, and support this work and your workers around the world. **LBT**

“CMI **built up** our culture of **kindness, love,** and **mutual desire** for growth.”



Almost one hundred people gathered for the Concordia Mission Institute in Concordia, Missouri.

The Next Generation

[Emily Wilson]

“**IT WAS EXCITING** to see so many of the next generation leaders and influencers of our Lutheran church out on a Friday night to learn more about and experience aspects of overseas ministry and Bible translation work,” says Rev. Rich Rudowkse.

Rich, Lutheran Bible Translators’ director for program ministries, served as main speaker at our mobilization dinner event at Concordia University Nebraska (CUNE) earlier this fall, as well as Concordia University Texas (CTX), and Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW).

The events were designed to be immersive, sensory experiences of cross-cultural activities. Participants enjoyed African cuisine as they discovered the impact of idioms within cultural contexts, practiced translation into a minority language, and developed a deeper understanding of the complex nature of the Bible translation ministry. More importantly, our goal was to challenge students to examine a more global view of Christianity by exploring the impact of God’s Word for every language.

We are all serving in God’s mission together as prayer partners, financial supporters, and missionaries. He has given each of us gifts to point others to Him. It is our prayer and hope that these mission dinner events will spread awareness of Bible translation among the next generation, so that more may capture the mission and vision of God’s Word for every language.



Students were challenged by the translation quiz.

“Though we can’t always see clearly what Christian mission from the west will look like in the future, it is encouraging to see the church embracing and celebrating the role of mother tongue Scripture in the growth of Christ’s kingdom around the world,” Rich says.

If you would like to find out more about the upcoming event at Concordia University Irvine (CUI) or where we will be in 2018-2019, please visit lbt.org/dinner or email Emily.Wilson@lbt.org. 

Eating in Nyangatom

[Dr. Jim Kaiser]

THE END OF THE ROAD? That’s Nyangatom territory!

The 25-30,000 Nyangatom people live at the very edge of Ethiopia, bordering South Sudan, and not far from Kenya. They are mainly pastoralists, raising cattle, sheep, and goats. Their villages tend to be temporary shelters that they move from place to place as they graze their herds.

The Nyangatom translation project is located about three hours northeast of their territory in the larger town of Jinka. That is where I worked earlier this year with the team to check over their translation of the book of Acts,

one of their first times to work with a consultant. During our three weeks together, we were able to finish the first 25 chapters of the book.

We came across a couple of figures of speech that had to do with eating during the translation checking. The first came in Acts 12 during the story of Peter’s release from prison by an angel. Verse 18 in the NIV says: **In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter.** I was surprised to hear the translators wrote something like this in the Nyangatom translation: **In the morning, there was a big commotion among the soldiers as to what ate Peter.**

Continued on page 6

Willing Spirits

[Staff writer]

THEY have helped mail out hundreds of thousands of prayer letters, *Messengers*, and countless other types of correspondence. They've manned tables at Lutheran Bible Translators cultural fairs, provided casseroles and baked goods for office events, and written thank you cards to donors. Their energy, friendship and go-getter attitude has been an example and inspiration to both staff and missionaries.

Who are they?

Since our early days in Orange, California, then in Aurora, Illinois, and now in Concordia, Missouri, Lutheran Bible Translators has been blessed to have the assistance of volunteers at our U.S. offices. These dedicated individuals have given thousands of hours to do often time-consuming jobs, freeing up staff to concentrate on their daily tasks.

It was bittersweet to leave behind the men and women who served so faithfully in our previous offices, but a new group of go-getters has stepped in since our move to Concordia. We couldn't be more grateful. We appreciate their interest in and enthusiasm for translation



Volunteers prepare *The Messenger* for shipment to churches across the country.

ministry and their commitment to sharing God's Word with people they will never meet this side of heaven.

Volunteers are so much more than people who help out at the office. They exemplify the willing spirit that freely shares the love of Christ here at home and on the mission field. Our work and lives have been enriched for knowing and working alongside each other. **LBT**

Voter Registration Coming Soon!

TO THOSE of you who serve as voting members during 2017, thank you! We urge you to renew your membership for 2018.

If you aren't a voting member, we hope you will consider participating in this important role with Lutheran Bible Translators. Voting members may nominate people to the board of directors, vote for the board, and serve on the board. Members also vote on bylaws changes and are invited to attend the annual general meeting and dinner event, featuring speakers from the mission field and leaders in Bible translation.

Whether you are *renewing* membership or *becoming a member for the first time*, two things are required.

Remember,
your Lutheran Bible
Translators **voter**
membership must
be renewed
each year!

First, you need to financially support Lutheran Bible Translators. (The amount doesn't matter.) *All donations must be postmarked in 2017.*

Then, early in 2018, when you receive your 2017 year-end tax document, you'll need to fill out and return the included voter registration form. You will be asked to verify that you are currently a member of a Lutheran church and that you are at least 18 years old. Married couples who give as a couple are both eligible to register separately to vote.

Your voice is important! Please help Lutheran Bible Translators stay true to its mission. Become a voting member for 2018!

For more information contact Barbara Beermann at **barbara.beermann@lbt.org** or 660-225-0811. **LBT**

A Christmas Story

[Martin Weber]

OUR early years in Yimbéré, Cameroon, opened our eyes to Christmas in a new way.

Our son Nathan's birthday is December 23. When he turned two, we decided to invite a few of his friends over. The friends came—and so did most of the kids from the village, of all ages. It was a great cultural lesson. In a face-to-face society like Kwanja, parties are not closed events to which a few people are invited. Everyone who wants to come, comes! And they were most welcome, though we did have to scramble to get enough popcorn popped for everybody to have a little.

During the party, Joan asked me to tell the kids the Christmas story. As I spoke, I tried to describe the difficulties Mary and Joseph went through to get all the way to Bethlehem for the census. I said things like “There were no cars, so they walked or went on a donkey for a distance of around 70 miles. There were no telephones or ways to book a room ahead, so they had to take what was available on arrival...”



And then it hit me! These Kwanja kids could easily imagine a high government official ordering ordinary people to come for a census. They would walk, it would take days, they would arrive and have to take whatever they could find for lodgings...

As a modern westerner, I often wonder how well we really understand the Biblical stories and what it felt like to live in those times. The Kwanja (or Dowayo, or Vuté, or any other group we work with) probably understand much of Scripture better than we do once it is translated into their language—because their lives are more similar to Bible-times lives than ours.

Over time, Christmas at Yimbéré has evolved. It necessarily includes a Christmas play that Joan wrote years ago, now led by young adults who performed in the play when they were kids, and who desire the tradition to continue. We rejoice that those who come to church at Christmastime hear the Christmas story from the Bible, and they hear it in their own language. **LBT**

Martin and Joan Weber have served in Cameroon for over 30 years. The Kwanja New Testament was dedicated in 2006, but the Webbers continue to serve to enable, equip, encourage, and empower Cameroonian partners that God's Word will reach people in more heart languages. For more information see lbt.org/project/martin-joan-weber/.

Interested in Charitable Bequests?

For more information, return this coupon to David Snyder, Lutheran Bible Translators, PO Box 789, Concordia, MO 64020 or visit www.lbt.org/legacy.

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Additional giving opportunities are available at lbt.org/donate.

Sweet Imagery

[Michael Ersland]

The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous...they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

PSALM 19:9A,10B

MY MIND was highly tuned to these verses while the Komba translation team and I were checking Psalm 19, partly due to the fact that one of the buildings on the mission grounds contained a bee hive that needed to be removed.

My Ghanaian supervisor let me know that he would be coming to remove the bees that night. My mind was a little distracted the rest of that day and I chuckled to myself as we read about how the Lord's ordinances are sweeter than honey.

Sure enough, my supervisor came as promised. He climbed up into the attic of the building and disappeared into the darkness toward the large hive, which left sticky, liquid gold oozing down the walls of a room. The honeycomb filled about four buckets!

After everything was gathered and the bees removed, I went home with two buckets of raw honey. I tasted it before the night watchman helped me process it. I may have had raw honey before in my life, but if so, it had no comparison to this stuff. I tasted my first dripping honeycomb that night.

God's Word is filled from cover to cover with imagery that is meant to connect to us in our daily life, helping us understand who God is and how He interacts with us.

While I could mentally grasp the meaning of these verses from Psalms before I tasted raw honeycomb, my senses hadn't really been engaged while reading, "They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."

Eating in Nyangatom

Continued from page 3

"Eating someone" is a figure of speech in Nyangatom that is used when someone is not where you expected them to be. The Nyangatom people will understand the soldiers were confused, since Peter was not in his cell where they assumed they would find him.

I heard the second figure of speech as we were nearing the end of our checking time. We were in Acts 24, and one of the translators wondered if we would finish the book before our time together was up. Another, who knew there would not be enough time to



What is sweeter than fresh, dripping honeycomb?

What a delight! What a sensation! God's rules are good, a 'good' that exceeds that of delectable food.

So, why are these rules so tasty? They reveal the perfect nature of God. This perfect nature is beyond what we can experience here on earth. (It's hard to imagine anything sweeter than fresh, dripping honeycomb).

Well, we finished checking the chapter and the translators were able to taste some of the golden goodness on a following day. I continue to maintain the upkeep for the mission grounds (bee-less buildings currently), attend Komba literacy classes, and visit the wider Komba area and churches to better understand the life and culture of my friends and community. **LBT**

Michael Ersland serves as translation advisor to the Komba Old Testament translation team in Ghana, West Africa. For more information visit lbt.org/project/michael-ersland/.

finish, said "You will eat it with your eye." This figure of speech means that although you see something, you will not be able to obtain it.

Of course, we will finish checking the book of Acts and the Nyangatom translation will be completed. Scripture is meant for all people, obtainable when we work together to share God's Word. **LBT**

Dr. Jim and Susan Kaiser live in Ethiopia, where Jim serves as a translation consultant with projects in several languages. Learn more at lbt.org/project/jim-susan-kaiser/.

LBT PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

July 1 – September 30, 2017

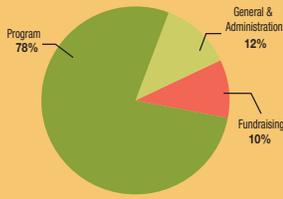
INCOME

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Designated	\$ 401,215	\$ 1,122,104
General (Undesignated)	375,697	1,148,975
Restricted Funds	55,472	104,905
Bequests	186,669	2,029,015
Endowments	97,347	270,014
Total Income	\$ 1,116,400	\$ 4,675,014

3rd Quarter Income



3rd Quarter Expenses



EXPENSES

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Program	\$ 667,813	\$ 2,169,793
Administration	103,884	310,021
Fundraising	89,798	282,506
Total Expenses	861,494	2,762,320
Net Total	\$ 254,906	\$ 1,912,694

Christmas in Kombaland

Continued from page 1

“Sitting outside, I always felt close to those shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night. And if you read the Christmas story, it seems that those shepherds weren’t very silent at all!”

When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child... The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen...

Thank you to everyone who had a part in bringing the Christmas story to the Komba speaking people of Ghana. Because of you, they’ve had the entire New Testament in their language since 2014. **LBT**

Sarah, husband Nathan, and their children spent over nine years living in Ghana, where Nathan served as translation advisor to the Komba New Testament project. They returned to the U.S. following the completion of the translation, where Nathan is finishing PhD work and Sarah serves on the member care team. Learn more at lbt.org/project/rev-nathan-sarah-esala/.

Gift Designations We make every effort to honor donor designation preferences, however, all gifts are subject to the discretion and control of Lutheran Bible Translators.

CUT HERE

CUT HERE

Birthdays

December

- 5 Isaac Esala*, United States
- 14 Paul Federwitz, Ghana
- 18 Joan Weber, Cameroon
- 21 Josiah Wagner*, Sierra Leone
- 24 Josh Wagner, Sierra Leone
- 25 John Davies, Papua New Guinea
- 31 Mical Hilbert, Botswana

January

- 5 Eliot Esala*, United States
- 6 Karen Tessaro, Nigeria
- 10 Josephine Derricks*, Cameroon
- 15 Alvina Federwitz, Adjunct Missionary
- 15 Michael Erslund, Ghana
- 22 David Federwitz, Ghana
- 22 Alexis Olson, Pre-field

- 27 Aaron Beckendorf*, Botswana
- 29 Micah Federwitz*, Ghana
- 31 Carsten Hilbert*, Botswana
- 31 Barbara Beermann, International Offices

February

- 3 Susan Kaiser, Ethiopia
- 8 JoyAnna Federwitz*, Ghana
- 11 Anna DeLoach*, United States
- 12 Gideon Kuhn*, Cameroon
- 16 Cindy Rodewald, International Offices
- 17 Michael Megahan, Tanzania

*missionary kid

missionary currents

Prayer partnership is the backbone of this ministry. Here are several prayer concerns for which we ask your support. May God bless you abundantly!

BOTSWANA

- Praise God for the opportunity the **Khwedam, Shekgalagari and Shiyeyi translation teams** had to attend a training workshop in Zambia this fall.

CAMEROON

- Pray for **Martin and Joan Weber** as they work to strengthen the national translators and further the Word of God in the languages of Cameroon.
- Pray for wisdom for those planning the **West Africa missionary retreat** which will take place in Cameroon in January.

SIERRA LEONE

- Pray for the **Wagner family** as they adjust to life as a family of six, with the addition of their baby girl.



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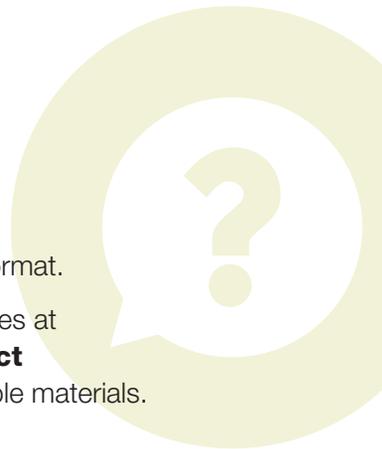
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Executive Director:
Dr. Mike Rodewald



DID YOU KNOW...

You can **print your own copy** of the Monthly Prayer Calendar. Visit **lbt.org/prayer** around the middle of each month to find the next month's calendar in PDF format.

You can also find additional resources at **lbt.org/contact/**. Click on **Contact and Resources** for a list of available materials.



GHANA

- Pray for IT Coordinator **Paul Federwitz** as he and his team develop new systems for effective and efficient data management.

NIGERIA

- Praise God that International Associate **Rev. Kierien Ayugha** was able to present a paper at the Forum of Bible Agencies International in Dallas, Texas, in October and to visit the Lutheran Bible Translators' international offices in Concordia, Missouri.

LIBERIA

- Praise God for the translation workshop held this past August in Liberia, where

translators learned to apply natural story principles to their work, so that the resulting Bible translations will sound natural to their intended audiences and be warmly embraced.



UNITED STATES

- Pray for **Rev. Andrew and Alexis Olson**, who are expecting their second child in March.
- Pray for **Rev. Carl and Kelsey Grulke** and **Elliot and Serena Derricks** as they work on partnership development in preparation for their first terms of service early next year. The Grulkes will serve in Botswana and the Derricks will serve in Cameroon.

- Pray for wisdom as **Rev. Rich Rudowski, Jim Laesch, and Emily Wilson** reflect on the results of their trip to Asia and continue planning for potential new programs and partnerships.
- Pray for the excellent results from the fall **Mission Dinner Events** at several of the Concordia Universities. Pray for God's guidance for students in attendance as they discern God's calling in their lives.
- Pray for several people in the application process or considering applying for missionary service with Lutheran Bible Translators.
- Missionary work can be a little dangerous and occasionally LBT missionaries are involved in frightening incidents. Praise God for His protection over our missionaries this past year, and pray for those still healing from trauma.
- Pray for Lutheran Bible Translators' **Member Care Team** as they continue to develop proactive strategies for meeting the emotional, spiritual, and physical care needs of missionaries and staff.

