



# they will See and Understand

ISAIAH 52:15; ROMANS 15:21

WINTER IN MINNESOTA

**Merry Christmas!** During this unprecedented time, may Jesus comfort you in your worries and assure you of His promises of salvation and peace. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!" - Luke 2:14

We greet you from Northfield, MN, where we are resting, recovering, waiting, studying, and working remotely. Below you'll find an update on the translation project and on Ruthie's condition.

## THEMNE TRANSLATION PROJECT

Thankfully the Themne translators are in good health and are back to team-checking the book of Psalms. Translator Thomas Larkoh who also works as a teacher and radio host told me during their COVID lockdown:

*We are on the work. ...We are working beyond schedule, because there is no school and no other activity. We almost work every day, every day! ... We are grateful to God, though things are not easy at all.*

Though I (Ruthie) am on short-term disability, I can monitor their progress and activities from our home in Northfield. Our LBT colleague in Sierra Leone, Amy Formella, has agreed to help advise the project in my absence. I am thrilled that the project's progress is steady and is more thorough than other times I've been away from Sierra Leone. Despite many health challenges last year, much of my time was spent in training and working with the team to work independently from outside involvement. My role has been critical to keep the project moving and keep the quality acceptable. My primary goal has been to equip the translators to fill this role themselves as they work—by giving them tools and resources to find answers to their questions and guidance in translating.

A year and a half ago, I recruited Reverend Kelvin Koroma (in the bright blue shirt below). You may recognize him from previous letters telling of his involvement in the *Jesus Film* as the voice of Jesus, and as a host for the showing of the *Jesus Film* after our Easter party in 2019. After being saved from Islam he became a dynamic pastor and friend to many in Makeni and beyond. He agreed to join the translation project full-time as a Themne Exegete. *What a tremendous answer to prayer!* Given his master's degree of Theology in African Christianity, he is well-equipped with Biblical studies and provides an aspect of translation advising I would never be able to acquire



Translators Simon Bangura, Rev. Kelvin Koroma, Daniel Fullah, Thomas Larkoh, and Joseph Kamara

Are you new to Wagner Updates? Please introduce yourself and contact us if you have any questions about our ministry.

RECURRING SUPPORT

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

100%

## WHO WE ARE



The Wagner Family serves with Lutheran Bible Translators in Sierra Leone, working alongside the Themne people in Translation & Scripture Use!

*Making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. (LBT's Mission)*

## TIMELINE

- OCT** Lizzie turns 3 (10/9), Ruthie's family (Lee) get-together, Josh studies and Ruthie on disability, COVID-19 upset for work and school
- NOV-DEC** Josh studies and writes for MA, Ruthie on disability, Our 11th Anniversary (11/21), Josiah turns 5 (12/21), Josh turns 40 (12/24)!!!, COVID-19 upset for work and school
- JAN-SPRING** Josh takes trip to Sierra Leone, we work remotely, Josh studies and writes, Ruthie on disability

## TAKE ACTION

**JOIN** our "Wagner Updates" group on Facebook! This is where we update most frequently.

[facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)

**GIVE** to "Wagner Ministry" online or by mailing a check. Please contact us or LBT if you'd like to set up automatic giving.

**PRaise** for doctors involved in Ruthie's care. Praise for ongoing progress in the Themne project.

**PRAY** for the Themne translators as they press on in this arduous task. Pray for LBT colleague Amy Formella as she helps with advising in Ruthie's absence.

## CONTACT/SUPPORT

✉ [Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org](mailto:Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org)

[facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)

📞 GOOGLE VOICE: 612.208.7680 (text anytime!)

🏠 LBT will forward "Wagner" mail to us.



Designate "Wagner Ministry"

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[www.lbt.org/give](http://www.lbt.org/give)

and share. He is a mother-tongue speaker of Themne, so I worked with him to effectively use the software and be a voice of wisdom and criticism on the team. I am still in awe of how the Lord has provided for the Themne project again and again. The project is not without persecution, and many of us involved have suffered a great deal to get the Word translated and produced in Themne, language to about 2.5 million people in Sierra Leone.

As I have stepped back for healing and rest, my pastor has encouraged me to reflect on Luther's teachings on vocation and to read and study Colossians.

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body, that is, the church. I have become its servant, according to God's commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ... I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me. - Colossians 1:24-26,29, CSB*

Selfishly I'm thankful that the translators have been prevented in doing their other jobs and have had extra time for drafting! *I wonder... have COVID restrictions enabled some of you to do unexpected projects?*



- Praise God for the support of Lutheran Bible Translators in supplementing disability and putting Josh on reduced assignment temporarily to focus on finishing his MA and caring for his family. Pray for Josh as he works remotely and does research and writing for his dissertation/thesis.
- Pray for the Themne team as they work on team-checking the book of Psalms. Pray as they individually study and draft Numbers, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Zechariah.

## OUR FAMILY & RUTHIE'S HEALTH

The good news is that Ruthie is doing much better than when we returned in February. She is now out of bed more often than in bed and is able to keep up with the kids and house on most days. She is on disability from work while still undergoing treatment and having the much needed rest that her body and mind needs. After months of appointments, we've understood that compounding traumas and infections triggered flares of migraines and neurological symptoms and pain. She has received diagnoses of both Fibromyalgia and PTSD. Her migraines and pain are still constant, but her doctors and therapist have helped control the pain in order for her body to heal and recover.

*Are there things that you would like to do but just can't due to COVID, illness, finances? I am certain you can empathize and relate to the frustrations we feel.* Ruthie longs to work on the translation and see our friends and colleagues, but for now, she cannot. We have moved to a lovely house in Northfield, near Josh's mom and grandparents. Elijah (8) and Isaiah (6) love their new school, and all the kids have grown and thrived in these conditions. A break from rashes and infections has done our bodies good!

*Would you pray for us?*

- Please pray for our family as we adjust to changes, wait on the Lord, and seek healing. Pray for relief and renewed strength for Ruthie.

## EXPECTATIONS & THANK YOU!

*We're sorry that we will not be accepting any speaking engagements at this time. Thankfully, our budget for 2021 is only \$228/month more than last year, and we are on track for meeting that. Our 2020 support was met. Thank you so much.*

No "thank you" is enough to express our gratitude to many of you financially supporting our ministry during these trying times. Through the ups and downs it is tempting to worry about the sustainability of our monthly support, but we have been reassured both by a steady income and a thriving ministry continuing in our absence—indicating to us that we are cared for and that you want to see this translation project through! May the Lord make it so. May the Lord bless and protect each one of you as you wait out this horrible pandemic. We pray especially for those of you who are sick or vulnerable and those who work in hospitals and emergency facilities. Thank you.

♥ Josh & Ruthie Wagner

Elijah (8), Isaiah (6), Josiah (5),  
& Elizabeth (3)

Missionaries with Lutheran Bible Translators  
Serving Bible Translation and Scripture Use in Sierra Leone

## PERCENTAGE COMPLETED OF EACH STAGE OF THE THEMNE OLD TESTAMENT PROJECT • GOAL: 2026

STAGE 1 - Drafting by Translators	STAGE 2 - Checking by Translation Team & Advisor	STAGE 3 - Reviewing by Community	STAGE 4 - Checking by Translation Consultant	CURRENT PERCENTAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROJECT
87%	27%	20%	8%	45%