

FALL 2019



Lutheran Bible  
Translators

# the messenger

Flourishing

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## FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Dear Reader:

Plants spring up at an amazing pace in the tropics. In fact, it is possible to just cut a branch off a plant, stick it into the ground, and see it flourish as it develops a root system and leaves. I experienced this personally during my first language project living in the tropics.

The pace of the Bible translation process seemed just the opposite then. In previous years, translating a book of the Bible was a slow manual effort, as missionaries slogged through each verse and chapter. Once a draft was finished, it could even be difficult to find anyone who could read well enough to review the text. But through the checking and review processes, the planted Word began to take root and flourish. Local churches grew. **Members matured in their faith and began actively sharing Jesus with others.** Why? So that others may know Him too.

This new generation, passionate about Jesus, is now entering the Bible translation story. It is awesome to witness them, not only as receivers, but actively translating the Bible for others! Several of these Bible translators—Kierien and Linus now in Nigeria, Baseki and Thuso in Botswana, and Solomon and Berhanu in Ethiopia—are examples of those serving that the Word take

root so that their language communities might fully know Jesus. They are not alone, but **stand with many others growing and flourishing in their faith—like the elderly**

**woman in Sierra Leone** who sings about literacy in this issue. They all share what they have been given so others might also hear of their salvation.

God has blessed us. **You thrive in your faith because you have God's Word** through which to live out your life. You use your gifts and talents that others might know Him too—thankful for what you have been given. Thank you for being a part of this unfolding Bible translation story. Pray that those still without God's Word may be reached. Rejoice as people flourish in the Word and grow in faith for their "forever."

In Christ,

Dr. Mike Rodewald  
CEO and Executive Director



DR. MIKE RODEWALD,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## On the cover:

*Kissi woman playing the sasa and worshiping in Kissi at the Lutheran Church in Buedu, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone. Image by Josh Wagner.*

## A Christian Family Tree Flourishing in Aramaic Language

by Rob Hilbert

“My grandmother, at age 8, was forced from her home with her family and marched through the desert to spend five years in a refugee camp. My grandfather, in his early teens, became separated from his family. He dodged Turkish soldiers out to kill Assyrian men on sight. It was the end of World War One. The victors swooped in to eliminate Christians from their territory,” recalls Lutheran Bible Translators missionary Rob Hilbert.

Rob served in Africa for six years. **He is the new project manager for the Aramaic Bible Translation project.** “My ancestors grew up in western Iran. They spoke an Aramaic language, Assyrian. My grandparents, Robert and Penna, emigrated from the Middle East. They met and married in Chicago.”

The roots go deep. **Assyrians, noted in the Old Testament, were among the first adopters of Christianity.** Today’s Aramaic speakers are descended from these early Christians. Some trace their history back to the era the Nicene Creed was developed. Others may track directly to St. Peter. This strong history was important to survive the adversity they faced.

The Aramaic Bible project aims to **preserve this language heritage** so Christianity continues to thrive.



*Robert and Penna Hilbert with daughter.*

Its specific mission is to translate God’s word into all five modern Aramaic dialects. **Rob says, “I am humbled to be a part of this team.** This is the culmination of all my work and education. I feel called to serve the project in any way I can. I hope that the relationships forged between these partners will be strong and enduring.”

To learn more about the project, go to <https://lbt.org/gods-enduring-word-a-legacy-of-hope/>. **m**

## Lutheran Bible Translators Attains Coveted 4-Star Rating (Again)



Charity Navigator (CN), evaluator of charities, recently announced the results of its latest review. According to Charity Navigator CEO Michael Thatcher, **the four-star rating LBT earned for the seventh consecutive time** “demonstrates the

ministry’s strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.”

**Once again, Lutheran Bible Translators has proven its deeply-rooted values.** Charity Navigator highlights the work of efficient and transparent organizations. The

rating indicates that the organization adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way. It also verifies that the organization exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in this group. Thatcher also stated, “Only 5% of the charities [we evaluate] have met this standard, receiving at least seven consecutive 4-star evaluations.”

Recognized as a guide to intelligent giving, Charity Navigator’s business is trustworthiness. CN provides an unbiased, objective, numbers-based rating system. Learn more about Charity Navigator at [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org). **m**

## FEATURE STORY

# The Future of Mission

## Building Mission Outposts

**What do vision, strategy, and responsibility have to do with Bible translation?**

*The Messenger* visited recently with Rev. Rich Rudowski, chief operating officer and director for program ministries, about the future of Bible translation.

**m:**

Why support Bible translation mission efforts?

**rr:**

We've asked prayer and financial partners of Lutheran Bible Translators why they invest some of their mission giving with LBT. They say it's because we have a **clear and simple vision: "Translate the Bible and put it in the hands of people."** That's what we've done, together with these support partners, for over fifty years and what we plan to keep doing. However, **how** and **by whom** continues to change (for more background, see *The Changing Paradigm of Mission* Spring 2019 *The Messenger*).

**m:**

How does Bible translation really happen?

**rr:**

Thanks to faithful and generous prayer and giving, we continue to be on the cutting edge of redefining the look of Bible translation ministry into the 21st century. Part of that **strategy is investing in local partners and their physical infrastructure.** Bible translation ministry happens in a physical location. While it may be romantic to think of teams working in a thatch roof hut to translate the Bible, there are shortcomings to that approach. That approach focuses on a process leading to a product. It does not build an **ongoing ability** for the churches in the language community to **carry out further** translation work, literacy, or other engagement with Scripture.



*Trained local leaders direct literacy efforts.*



*Prepared and motivated partners engage and share the Word.*

**m:**

In what direction is Bible translation ministry moving?

**rr:**

We believe that it is important to work in ways that are **sustainable and responsible**. Bible translation, literacy, and Scripture engagement should **continue with local motivation and direction**. That's why we believe it is important to help our partners to invest in their infrastructure. They are not just buildings—they are mission outposts that help gain a foothold in areas where the gospel has yet to take deep root. They are mission outposts from which qualified and trained church leaders, evangelists, teachers, and leaders can be deployed. These local people, prepared for the task, can share God's word in their heart languages and help the church and community to immerse more deeply into the Scriptures.

**Adding resources to those of partners provides ongoing ability for local churches and individuals to move the mission further.**

**m:**

Will this plan work?

**rr:**

For this purpose, we have created the International Development Fund. In the past two years, gifts to this fund have enabled long time partners at the Liberian Literacy and Translation Organization (LIBTRALO) to build and move into new administrative offices in Liberia. We have also assisted our sister organization, LBT-Canada, with a new soon-to-be-completed Bible center in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon to serve the needs of multiple language communities.

And there's more! In the next five years, we plan to work with our partners to improve or develop infrastructure in Southeast Asia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. As a supporter of Bible translation ministry, we ask you to prayerfully consider a special gift to the International Development Fund to join in building mission outposts. Your gifts strengthen heart language Bible translation and gospel proclamation in ministry locations still out there that "salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Isaiah 49: 6.

“

**The vision is clear,  
“Translate the Bible  
and put it in the  
hands of people”**

**but how and by whom  
continues to evolve.**

”

***Mark your gift specifically for the International Development Fund to support sustainable and responsible mission and ministry.***

# How to Recognize a Call to Mission

by Emily Wilson

**“NOT guaranteed: running water, electricity, or internet.”**

This ad might not typically inspire people to see the world. But the Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) Crossroads experience is not a typical overseas trip. Instead, Crossroads offers the opportunity to explore Bible translation ministry. Participants may discover if they are **called to career mission work**.

This June, the Crossroads team visited Ethiopia, eastern Africa. They observed staff and partners in dialogue. **They dug deeper into the work of local missionaries who translate the Bible and support Scripture use.** They studied the Dirayta, Tsamakko, Konso, Dorze, and Zayse programs—just a handful of Ethiopia’s more than 80 languages. They witnessed joys and problems in ministry.

Each participant was challenged to ask, **“Can I see myself serving in God’s mission through Bible translation ministry?”**

Mission partnerships are thriving in Africa, southeast Asia, and Papua New Guinea! A great need exists for missionaries! To find out more about these international careers, contact [recruiter@lbt.org](mailto:recruiter@lbt.org).

*Team takes a break while touring Konso village.*



*Mission explorer Ariana Schulte tries out a loom in a Dorze village to experience local culture.*

## YOUR VOTE COUNTS

If you were a **2018 donor**, then you qualify as a 2019 member of Lutheran Bible Translators if you are also **over age 18** and a **member of a local Lutheran church**.

As a member, you may nominate and vote for the Board of Directors and participate in any changes to the by-laws (charter document). If you and your spouse donate jointly, you are each eligible to have one vote.

If you have not yet signed up to receive voting materials in 2019 send an email directly to **Board.Business@LBT.org**, before **September 16, 2019**. Include in your response your full name, your spouse’s full name and email (if applicable), and the statement “I meet LBT membership criteria and would like to receive voting materials in 2019.”

# Birthdays

## September

- 2 Marshall Schultz, United States
- 3 Eden Federwitz\*, Ghana
- 4 Kelsey Grulke, Botswana
- 4 Karissa Esala\*, United States
- 11 Carrie Federwitz, Papua New Guinea
- 13 Anna Morrison, International Offices
- 17 David Snyder, International Offices
- 26 Caleb Rodewald, International Office
- 27 Rebecca DeLoach, United States
- 29 Gideon Grulke\*, Botswana
- 29 Isaac Grulke\*, Botswana

## October

- 1 Gloria Kuhn\*, Cameroon
- 8 Jim Laesch, International Offices
- 9 Elizabeth Wagner\*, Sierra Leone
- 11 Martin Weber, Cameroon
- 14 Rob Veith, United States
- 14 Jonathan Federwitz, Papua New Guinea
- 25 Becky Grossmann, United States
- 26 Linda Gari, International Offices
- 28 Charlotte Brandt, International Offices
- 30 Chuck Tessaro, Nigeria

## November

- 2 Rebecca Rudowske\*, United States
- 13 Michaela Federwitz\*, Ghana
- 22 Leah Federwitz\*, Papua New Guinea
- 22 Rob Hilbert, United States
- 27 Amy Formella, Sierra Leone
- 28 Andrew Olson, Tanzania
- 29 Sarah Esala, United States

\*missionary kid

# FINANCIALS

April 1–June 30, 2019

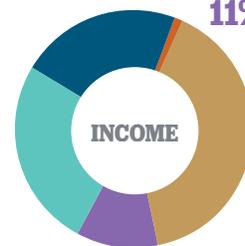
## INCOME

	Unaudited 2nd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Designated	\$ 436,461	\$ 1,016,867
General (Undesignated)	363,116	609,879
Restricted Funds	16,727	41,117
Bequests	681,115	787,300
Endowments	193,267	204,914
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 1,690,686</b>	<b>\$ 2,660,078</b>

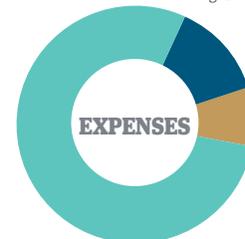
## EXPENSES

Program	\$ 934,490	\$ 1,913,894
Administration	159,705	249,320
Fundraising	92,792	181,271
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 1,186,987</b>	<b>\$ 2,344,485</b>

General (Undesignated) **22%** Restricted Funds **1%**  
 Designated **26%** Bequests **40%**  
 Endowments **11%**



Program **79%**  
 Administration **13%**  
 Fundraising **8%**



# Pray for:

**Asia-Pacific** > Pray for the safety of the **“Khon” Sunday School training team** continuing their work to equip teachers in local “Khon” churches. The team hopes to reach about 80 churches with training this year. > Pray that church leaders become motivated to encourage the language work in Papua New Guinea resulting in prayer and financial support.

**Botswana** > Pray for **Tiffany Smith** as she prepares to leave for a three-month Bible translation internship in Botswana.

**Cameroon** > Pray for **Rev. Mike and Kara Kuhn** during their partnership development time that they may create and nourish great connections with family, friends, and support partners.

**Ethiopia** > Pray for **Rev. Berhanu Ofgaa** as he prepares Bible translation students by teaching the History of Bible Translation course at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia. > Pray for the **students at the Mekane Yesus Seminary** who are entering their second year of Bible translation studies.

**Tanzania** > Pray that **Rev. Andrew and Alexis Olson** learn the Swahili language well as they continue to become accustomed to life in a new country.

**United States** > Pray for the **Bible Translation Conference** taking place in Texas in October as attendees from Lutheran Bible Translators gain knowledge to help them in their work. > Pray for the upcoming reprinting of **Yala and Bandi Bible translations** and the people whose faith will flourish because of the translations.

# 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.

Dr. Mike Rodewald, Editor  
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Lutheran Bible Translators, an independent mission group founded in 1964, is the only Lutheran organization dedicated to making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. LBT actively recruits Lutherans to serve as Bible translators, literacy or vernacular media specialists and support missionaries. The LBT ministry is supported by the prayers and contributions of fellow Christians. It is not subsidized by any church body or sponsoring agency.

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## THE LITERACY EFFECT

# Deeper Roots for God's Word

by Ruthie and Josh Wagner

“Most people have no personal interaction with written materials, like Scripture, in a way they can understand,” says missionary Ruthie Wagner. Ruthie and husband Josh live in Sierra Leone, helping translate Scripture into the local language.

But why? In this country, **the literacy rate in the local language is less than 20%**. That is changing.

The full Bible has been available in the local Kissi language since 2014. For years Lutheran Bible Translators has provided support for literacy efforts. The Wagners recently visited a project in the north. “The literacy classes were jaw-dropping,” according to Josh. “We saw crowds of people, reading in their own language.”



*Singers worship in their own language.*

Students, many of them women, proudly demonstrated their ability by reading from the Kissi Bible. Ruthie couldn't help but exclaim, “Seeing the joy on the faces of those people touched my heart! As a mother, I appreciate that nursing babies and rambunctious toddlers did not stop these strong women from receiving the **gift of literacy**. It is free, but requires hard work and dedication.”



*Mothers often bring children along to literacy classes.*

Participants often walk for miles to attend classes. “When I couldn't be more impressed, I saw a woman in her 80s,” Ruthie says. “Gripping her pencil, **she sang songs about the empowering value of reading in her own language**. In her last years, she flourishes alongside others who are also able read and engage more deeply with God's Word than ever before.”

What a treasure to read again and again, a verse, a chapter, a book, the entire Bible. **m**