

CHRISTMAS 2019



Lutheran Bible
Translators

the messenger

Harvesting

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FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Dear Reader:

Did you know that 95% of all printed Bibles are in English? That's a lot of English Bibles!

Did you know that only 4.8% of the population know English as their first language? That's 360 million people of the 7.5 billion on earth.

So fewer than 5% of the people read the language in which 95% of the Bibles are printed. A small consolation is that an estimated 10-20% of the people use English as a secondary form of communication. Some are fluent in English, but others are limited to a few words. While well-intentioned, Bibles and mission efforts **only have the capacity to reach a small part of the world's population** through English.

As God's people, we have choices when proclaiming the good news of the Bible. We could limit ourselves to those who already know English. Or, we could teach the other 95% of the world's people to understand God's Word in English. **But that's not very Lutheran of us!**

Thankfully, we have another choice—translate Scripture into languages where it is not yet available! Our history is built upon those who could read the Word *in their own languages*. **The Bible translation story is God's Word moving throughout the world** coming to people as they are. What better reason to be involved in mission than to encourage someone to read the Bible in his/her own language, especially someone who would otherwise never know Jesus and experience the fullness of salvation?

I am thankful for your participation in this awesome mission story. You may even experience the joy of seeing your part in the stories in this issue. Rejoice with the people of Botswana preparing for the launch of the Shekgalagari language Bible! Celebrate Christmas with the Komba people in Ghana! Give thanks for the volunteers who faithfully serve in advancing the mission! **The story of Bible translation is one of God working through each of us, all together, to accomplish His purpose.**

Help provide the foundation for other generations and other peoples to grow in their faith. Give that others may know Jesus, too.

Put God's Word in their hands.

In Christ,



Dr. Mike Rodewald
CEO and Executive Director



DR. MIKE RODEWALD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On the cover:

*Komba people celebrating in Ghana.
Image by William Haun.*

A Harvest of Life: Celebrating Christmas Conventions

The harvest is just past ... Christmas is just ahead ... After the harvest is stored, Komba Lutherans in Ghana relax and anticipate informal Christmas gatherings called conventions. These conventions last several days and extend almost around the clock. Greetings, devotions, meals, singing, and dancing are all important to the bonding experience and repeated daily.

Reading God's Word is an important part of Christmas conventions. The Word is read not just once, but many times throughout several days. Readers of different ages come from different towns. As each reader bends to take the microphone, the atmosphere becomes silent. The Word is read in Komba, a language they can all understand. The reader begins, "The book of John, chapter 1: 'The Word became flesh ...'"

Missionary Michael Ersland says, "The act of God's Words being spoken in our lives is a mystery when we stop and think about what is happening. God uses the Holy Spirit to work through His Word to bring faith and life to the hearers."

"We often don't know how different people are affected by the Scripture as it is read in public areas. I wonder what **my Muslim friend** thinks when he listens, walking over to the convention from his motorcycle shop," Michael says.

Those spoken words also reach **others, who practice local traditional religions**, as they sell their goods to the gathered crowd. Michael reflects, "Will it make a difference to them?"

"For **my Christian family**," Michael declares, "the words bring life!" Believers again hear spoken words that bring an unseen harvest of hope. **m**



Receiving the blessing at Christmas Convention in Gbintiri, Ghana.

“

The Word became flesh
and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory,
glory as of the only Son
from the Father,
full of grace and truth.

”

Komba reader at Christmas Convention in Ghana.



■ FEATURE STORY

Harvest in Due Season:

Taking the Long View in an Instant Gratification Society

by Rev. Rich Rudowske
Director for Program Ministries & COO

before my life in full-time ministry service as a pastor and missionary,

I was a financial analyst in the US healthcare sector. I diagnosed financial and process problems in struggling departments then recommended solutions to make the company more profitable. I was expected to produce tangible results quickly in order to prove my value. After all, the corporation was investing in me to help make it more valuable.

I worked myself out of more than one job by getting results.

I learned to love the rush of making things happen in an instant gratification world.

Now, more than ten years later, my experience as a Bible translation missionary and organization leader has taught me this lesson—**we should never lose sight of the results, but we should recognize that the harvest comes in due season.** Bible translation ministry is not one of instant gratification or quick results.

It's a longer process. It's hard work. The harvest doesn't always come in our time or even according to our plans.

It is empowering to realize that **we work in God's mission, not ours.** He calls us to use all the tools, skills, resources, and relationships with which He blesses our partners and us. He calls us to work with diligence, but He also calls us to trust Him with the results.

You may remember the early 1990s when devastating civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone seemingly destroyed the bulk of LBT's work there. Today, locally-led literacy groups continue to quietly and effectively produce a harvest of believers. The Jembwe family learned about Jesus Christ

and came to faith through reading the Bible in a literacy class, made possible through your support. They now openly express their faith together. **“We hope to be members of our church until we join other believers in the life hereafter.”**

Audio scriptures in the Khwedam language sent into the remote parts of the Kalahari in southern Africa for the last six years are reaping a harvest. You may recall the story of the old man who refused to attend church because he could not understand what was being said. After listening to the audio Scriptures—again available as a result of your support—he said, **“We cannot read, but now we carry the Bible in our minds.”**

You nurture exciting new ventures like a seminary program that will train 75 pastoral candidates for service in Bible translation ministry. An extended campaign to raise funds for ministry technology has resulted in a bounty of tech equipment to accelerate the translation process. Laptops, tablets, audio recording equipment, and digital cameras are being placed in the hands of our ministry partners and their front-line workers. **Only the Lord knows the harvest that will result from these efforts.**

We are confident that there will be a harvest, but we don't know when it will appear. What drives my decision to keep on working in the long haul non-instant gratification ministry of Bible translation?

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”
—GALATIANS 6:9

(Jesus says) **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”**
—MATTHEW 24:35

Thanks to each of you taking the long view of mission through your faithful prayer and financial support. There are many opportunities to be involved in mission, but there is no opportunity like Bible translation. **m**

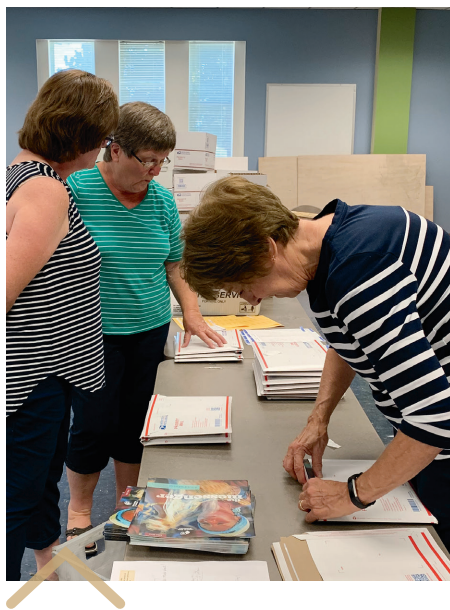
“

Never lose sight of the results but recognize that the harvest comes in due season.

”

More Than Willing Hearts and Hands

by Ruth Rodewald, Retired Volunteer Coordinator



Volunteers preparing Messenger bulk mailing.

Known as “Happy Volunteers,” these are the women and men who write hundreds of thank-you messages to donors, assist with mailings, and cheerfully answer the call when their help is needed.

WHY? Here are several responses from the more than 40 volunteers.

BETTY UMBACH

Volunteering is my outreach for Christ. I can't go to all nations, but I can help spread God's Word through LBT.

NANCY ROEPE

I have willing hands! This volunteering doesn't take a lot of time and talent and I am willing.

JANELLE VIRUS

I want to help this wonderful organization however I can. It's a small way to give back to Him.

CINDY EBERS

What we do as volunteers is helping spread God's Word and that is definitely worthwhile!

KATHY SCHNAKENBERG

It's dire! It's so very important to get the Word of God into the languages of the people so they can hear it, see it, believe it!

YVONNE MITKOS

When I was a little girl, I worried about the souls on the other side of the world who did not have access to the Holy Bible. As an adult I've never had the opportunity until now for a 'hands-on' contribution to spread the Word to these souls. I feel blessed to spend a little of my time helping in my small way.

To learn more about volunteering in the Concordia area, please contact LBT. **You will be appreciated!** [m](#)

COMING SOON: SHEKGALAGARI NEW TESTAMENT

The Greatest Gift

The best things come to those who wait. Soon Shekgalagari language speakers in Botswana will wait no more! Chiefs, pastors, lay people, and children will have the New Testament in their own language. They are eager to celebrate!

Missionaries Rev. Carl and wife Kelsey Grulke live in Botswana, where they help bring the Word of God to life for those who speak Shekgalagari. The Shekgalagari **project has been a team effort**, begun by other missionaries almost **ten years** ago and grown by God's love. Each missionary accomplished specific tasks as part of the overall process. “Our role,” says Carl, “is checking and preparing the final text for printing.”

“We are also helping the Shekgalagari community with plans to **launch the New Testament and encourage use through an audio Bible, movies, or Scripture app**,” Kelsey says. “What a joy and privilege to watch a project tended by the labor of so many come to full flower through God's growth!”

Follow **The Grulkes' LBT Adventures** on Facebook to learn more. [m](#)



Final checking of manuscript in Kang, Botswana.

Birthdays

December

- 1 Melissa Schweigert,
International Offices
- 5 Isaac Esala*, United States
- 12 Judah Grulke*, Botswana
- 14 Paul Federwitz, Ghana
- 18 Joan Weber, Cameroon
- 19 Serena Derricks, Cameroon
- 21 Josiah Wagner*, Sierra Leone
- 24 Josh Wagner, Sierra Leone
- 25 John Davies, Papua New Guinea
- 27 Alyssa Petty, International Offices
- 28 Kathy Knipmeyer,
International Offices
- 31 Mical Hilbert, United States

January

- 5 Eliot Esala*, United States
- 6 Karen Tessaro, Nigeria
- 10 Josephine Derricks*, Cameroon
- 15 Alvina Federwitz, United States
- 15 Michael Ersland, Ghana
- 22 David Federwitz, Ghana
- 22 Alexis Olson, Tanzania
- 25 Sarah Stilwell,
International Offices
- 27 Aaron Beckendorf*, Botswana
- 29 Micah Federwitz*, Ghana
- 31 Carsten Hilbert*, United States
- 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, United States
- 18 Rhoda Houge, Ghana

*missionary kid

FINANCIALS

July 1—September 30, 2019

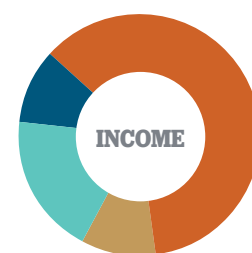
INCOME

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Designated	\$ 638,474	\$ 1,655,342
General (Undesignated)	337,812	947,691
Restricted Funds	2,091,108	2,128,935
Bequests	339,524	1,126,824
Endowments	360	205,274
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 3,407,278	\$ 6,064,065

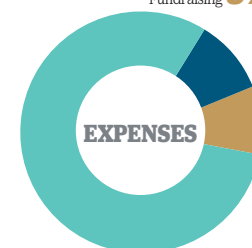
EXPENSES

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Program	\$ 915,322	\$ 2,832,619
Administration	109,448	360,207
Fundraising	102,009	283,572
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,126,778	\$ 3,476,399

General (Undesignated) **10%** 61% Restricted Funds
Designated **19%** 10% Bequests



Program **81%**
Administration **10%**
Fundraising **9%**



Pray for:

Tanzania > Pray for **Andrew and Alexis Olson** as they settle in to their new home on Ukerewe Island in Tanzania. Pray for good friendships, smooth transitions, and the ability to learn Kereewe.

Botswana > Pray for the **Beckendorf family** returning to life and work in Botswana with the Khwe. > Praise God for the progress being made in the **Shekgalagari project** moving towards publication.

Cameroon > Pray for the **Vute and Kwanja teams**, together with the Webers, completing work on the lectionaries in those two languages.

Liberia > Pray for the **translation teams in Liberia** who continue to revise and check the work.

Nigeria > Pray for **Chuck and Karen Tessaro** as they return to Nigeria after visits with existing and potential supporters. Pray for smooth transitions and continued progress.

Sierra Leone > Pray for **Amy Formella** as she returns to Sierra Leone after interactions with partners in the US.

United States > Pray for **Lutheran Bible Translators and its international partners** in planning a new year of ministry in countries around the world. May the power of God's Word begin and strengthen faith in many!

West Africa > Pray for the **Information Technology team** working with partners in West Africa to assess computer needs and provide technical support. > Pray for intern **Ariana Schulte** as she continues her year-long internship in Africa.

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

Editorial management, Barbara Beermann

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Correspondence may be directed to The Messenger 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.

Executive Director: Dr. Mike Rodewald



Lutheran Bible
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BREAKING GROUND TO REAP FAITH

The Mission Vision of Many Partnering Together

The Lutheran Church body with the most members? A vision for mission? The fastest growing? That is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) at **9.5 million members** growing at 8% per year.

In August, the EECMY Church Council and representatives from Lutheran Bible Translators met in Addis Ababa on the campus of Mekane Yesus Seminary (MYS) to celebrate ground-breaking for an **innovative new building project**.

Rev. Dr. Tilahun Mendedo, LBT Executive Development Officer was there, "It is a **new day in mission** for Lutherans in Ethiopia! This will position Christianity and God's Word for the future in this area."

The Church Council consists of **synod presidents and officials from 29 regional synods** as well as representatives from other EECMY entities. All gathered in witness to **Bible translation as mission**

moving in Ethiopia. "The church needs to make certain that everyone is able to read and hear the gospel in language that is understandable," proclaimed EECMY Presiding President Yonas Yigezu during his Reformation Day sermon. A worthy goal in mission.

LBT and seminary personnel currently partner through a Bachelor-level program **to train seminary students as translators**. But lack of facilities hindered a larger vision. Resource partners responded. Initial funding was secured. Construction is next.

The new building shall include classroom, library, office, and dormitory space for seminary students enrolled in the Bible translation program. **But that's**



Representing LBT: Dr. Mike Rodewald, Dr. Tilahun Mendedo, Mr. Craig Olson, Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa, Dr. Jim Kaiser.

not all! This building is planned to be *self-sustaining*—it will generate income to train Bible translators for both today's needs and projects of the future.

The mission vision of many partnering together is being harvested! More to come!

Go to <https://lbt.org/breaking-new-ground/> to learn more. **m**