Dear Reader:

Google lists over forty different church bodies in the US. There are 110 independent Lutheran church bodies in Africa, according to the *Journal of Lutheran Mission*. The count is more than 150 even before adding Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. It is no surprise that there are a wide variety of hymns, languages, and practices expressing our Lutheran Christian identity.

But there is one notion—firmly rooted in the Reformation—upon which Christians in every Lutheran church body agree—God’s Word is the light of salvation (Isaiah 49: 6) reaching the end of the earth for all people and nations. Where will the light shine in 2020? In this issue, you will notice new projects developing on the horizon. You will see where people will celebrate milestones this year!

Knowing Scripture through one’s own language is the story of salvation. Those without the Word urgently need to see and hear the story of the light of their salvation. God uses us as His people toward a collective impact that others know Jesus too.

Thank you for participating in mission through Lutheran Bible Translators. Bible translation is the story of God’s Word moving throughout the world. Rejoice knowing the Word reaches others and is bringing the light of salvation to the end of the earth.

In Christ,

Dr. Mike Rodewald
CEO and Executive Director

On the cover:

A local boy fishes on Lake Victoria, Tanzania. Image by Rev. Andrew Olson.
A Look at Fishing Through Other Eyes

Andy loved fishing as a child. He spent his early years in western Africa as a missionary kid. His family served on a translation project in Liberia. Thirty years later, he is a carpenter and fisherman in northern Illinois. He’s also the son of Jim Laesch, Lutheran Bible Translators regional director for southern and east Africa.

Father and son recently traveled to a new translation project for the Kerewe people on Ukerewe Island in Tanzania. Andy found a common interest because he and the Kerewe people are avid fishermen.

Jim organized a training activity for the local language team. The task was to translate a story about an ice fishing experience. Team members knew about fishing, but translating this story had an extra challenge. They had never seen ice! It wasn’t a good first translation.

Then the translators met Andy. They saw ice fishing through Andy’s eyes. They translated the story again. This time, they were more successful.

Both teacher and students benefitted. Andy says, “Visiting another part of Africa offered another perspective and a chance to witness why we were in Liberia years ago.” The translators learned directly from Andy how to better translate unknown ideas. Their accuracy and creativity improved. They experienced ice fishing through faith, not sight.

The first thing I saw when I stepped off the ferry was a cell phone tower. Technology is present. Yet, the pace of life is much more relaxed.”

—Andy Laesch

Original Story in English:

Last winter I went ice fishing with Andy. He’s a carpenter by trade and has built his own shanty. It’s very sturdy and even has a window and a door. We drilled holes in the ice and fished for hours. Brats were grilled and chili was cooked. We ate a lot and we laughed a lot. Then we went home. Fish? Didn’t catch a one.

Back-Translation:

The year we pass, we went fishing. This fishing, it was on a sea/lake. This lake, it was ice because of the very cold. Him, he is a craftsman expert. He built his own bush-tent for that place. It has window and door self. We use craftsman thing, it will make hole into the ice. We turn turn turn until it reach the water, then we fish…. The time, it was good, but fish, we not see any.

Background Information:

- "Winter" is a cold season in some northern countries.
- In the cold season, the lake will freeze with ice on top. A person can walk on the ice.
- A shanty is a small shelter that is portable.
- It can be for 2-5 persons.
- A shanty gives the people protection from very cold weather while fishing.
- A special tool (auger) is used to make the hole in the ice.

Ukerewe Island in Lake Victoria is accessible only by boat. Image by Hayden Wilkens.

Andy enjoys fishing in 1982.

Andy explains the finer points of ice fishing.
FEATURE STORY

Faith Beyond Sight:
Seeing the Potential

UNWAVERING FOCUS: PUTTING GOD’S WORD IN THE HANDS OF PEOPLE IN THE LANGUAGE THEY BEST UNDERSTAND.

The focus remains constant—putting God’s Word in the hands of people in their own language. The historical strategy for Bible translation has always been based on sending people to aid in translation. Missionaries are recruited, trained, and sent to serve in intercultural ministry. Often one missionary serves with one language community from start to finish, sometimes for 20 years. “Putting God’s Word directly in the hands of the people is an important part of Bible translation ministry. In some contexts, it offers the best chance of success in this generation,” he says. “The need for western missionaries to go and serve is still great!”

But approaches to Bible translation as mission have shifted over the decades. Partner churches and foreign Bible societies also put mission strategy into action. Lutheran Bible Translators partners with them through a grant system, not directly managed by a missionary. Rather, the missionary coordinates
and advises programs for multiple language communities and initial skill-building.

“The Lord has blessed these partnerships and led us to new ones,” says Rev. Rudowske. In 2020, expenses for programs will exceed missionary-based expenses.

New ways of serving in mission create new ways to support Lutheran Bible Translators. Directly funding a missionary family is always valued but supporters can pray, encourage, and sponsor these new partnership programs as well.

Those who first gathered in the 1960’s to imagine the vision of Lutheran Bible Translators could not have seen where that vision would lead. Yet they stepped forward in faith and trusted God to guide them. The year 2020 marks 56 years of service for Lutheran Bible Translators. The vision is undertaken by different people and carried out in a different way. But the goal is still the same—God’s Word for every language.

“We walk with faith beyond sight, not knowing how the Lord will provide what we need to meet all the potential opportunities. We don’t know how requests to expand our programs in Tanzania, Madagascar, and Southeast Asia will be fulfilled. What we know is that this is still His mission,” says Rev. Rudowske. “Our role is to keep serving together to put God’s Word in their hands.”

Literacy Projects in Sierra Leone

People need the Bible in a language they can read, hear, and understand but what happens after the Bible is translated is also important. Lutheran Bible Translators serves with partners in eight different language communities in literacy in Sierra Leone. In the past four years, partners have started over 200 literacy programs, graduating more than 3000 people with varying levels of literacy in local languages.

“My heart is to promote literacy in the mother tongue in the church. Many of these people in the church have not been to school, but now they can read the Bible. They can understand concepts better in their own language. When they are able to read the Bible in their mother tongue, they can share this Bible with their children at home. They can also share this Bible with their friends in the street or in the community.”

—Mr. Daniel Fullah, Literacy Trainer

“Our mandate is to make the Word of God available in the heart language of the people to reach them in different ways. In the last 10-15 years, we saw the need to start teaching our children, start teaching adults, to read and write in their local languages for the Bible to be meaningful to our people.”

—Mrs. Christiana Jones, General Secretary of Bible Society of Sierra Leone

Go to www.lbt.org/give and select any of the literacy projects to get involved.
A Blessed Tuesday

Who cares about Bible translation? Social media users cared on Giving Tuesday! This one-day event each year celebrates the generosity of charitable giving in the holiday spending season.

Lutheran Bible Translators set a simple goal for Giving Tuesday – raise $25,000 for Bible printing in three languages. Social media posts rolled out stories of the great need. Shares, likes, and follows multiplied the reach. At final count, gifts of $32,892 were received for these and other projects!

As a result, the Bandi and Yala language communities in west Africa will reprint sold-out New Testaments. The Shekagalagari of Botswana will print the first copies of their soon to be completed New Testament translation. Other projects will also benefit.

Giving Tuesday participants saw the need and responded. Givers were blessed, as well as those who will receive the translated Bibles. Prayers and financial support offered that day will help to put God’s Word in the hands of people who do not yet have it.

Charlotte Brandt and Gift Records staff accept gifts by phone.

The Word of the Lord does not return empty, it shall accomplish God’s purpose.

—Isaiah 55:11

What’s Ahead in 2020

Relying on faith beyond our sight, Lutheran Bible Translators anticipates great potential in this year. While exact dates are not yet known, expect to see progress marked by these special events:

**DURING QUARTER 1**
- Dedication of the Vute Lectionary Series in Cameroon, February 23
- Dedication of the Bible House in Cameroon, March 1
- Dedication of the Kwanja-Ndung Lectionary Series in Cameroon, March 7
- Dedication of the Gola New Testament in Liberia, March 8

**DURING QUARTER 2**
- Dedication of the Khoekhoegowab Bible in Namibia

**DURING QUARTER 4**
- Dedication of the Shekgalagari New Testament in Botswana
- Dedication of the Konso Bible in Ethiopia
- Dedication of the Yala New Testament second edition in Nigeria

WHY DO YOU SUPPORT BIBLE TRANSLATION?

“I personally know the impact of having the Bible in my heart language.”

—

“So that people can hear the Bible in their own language to believe in Jesus and go to heaven!”

—

“Because everyone deserves to learn about and understand God’s love for them.”
### FINANCIALS

**October 1—December 31, 2019**

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**Birthdays**

**March**
1. Lisa Beckendorf, Botswana
2. Levi Federwitz*, Ghana
9. Maila Davies, Papua New Guinea
12. Lydia Derricks*, Cameroon
13. Tilahun Menedo, International Offices
18. Selah Olson*, Tanzania
22. Hannah Federwitz*, Ghana
24. Danny DeLoach, United States
26. Mary Jane Gruke*, Botswana

**April**
13. Tim Beckendorf, Botswana
17. Annaka Esala*, United States
20. Elliot Derricks, Cameroon
25. Tom Holman, United States
26. Nancy Burmeister, United States

**May**
6. Carl Gruke, Botswana
9. Berhanu Ogaa, Ethiopia
11. Mike Rodewald, International Offices
12. Tobias Kuhn*, Cameroon
15. Janet Borchard, Papua New Guinea
15. Michelle Miller, Southeast Asia
15. Emily Wilson, International Offices
17. Ali Federwitz, Ghana
19. Wesley DeLoach*, United States
22. Angela Tayloe, International Offices
25. Mike Kuhn, Cameroon
28. Ken Bunge, United States

*missionary kid

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Pray for:

**Botswana** Pray for the three-week literacy workshop taking place during April.

**Cameroon** Pray for Elliot and Serena Derricks as they continue to visit villages and meet partners in their new language community.

**Ghana** Pray for Michael and Naomi Ersland as they take classes in Dallas, Texas, to further their ability to work with the Komba language community.

**Liberia** Pray for the Bandi team’s search for translators to work on the Old Testament project.

**Sierra Leone** Pray for the Kono literacy team for guidance in developing literacy and Scripture engagement materials, as well as stories, calendars, and teaching/learning materials.

**Tanzania** Pray for the Kerewe translation teams as they finish drafting the books of Luke and Acts.

**United States** Pray for all those gathering at the Best Practices for Ministry Conference in Phoenix February 19-22, especially Lutheran Bible Translators staff as they build and support relationships.

**Pray for:**

- **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.
LITERACY IN THE SHADOWS

Encouraging Faith

Note: Specific details were intentionally omitted or changed to protect the affected language community.

For 22 years, Lutheran Bible Translators shared the task of translating the Bible for a small western African language community (“WALC”). In 2008, the New Testament was dedicated. “We no longer need an interpreter,” one speaker said that day. “We can now read the Good News of Jesus Christ in our own language!”

Fast forward to the present day. Boxes of printed “WALC” New Testaments are available. Local people want to use God’s Word but many cannot read, even in their own language. In addition, there are others around that seek to persecute those who want to follow Christ.

The local Lutheran church is discreetly planning to improve the “WALC” people’s literacy. The goal is to recruit 35 literacy teachers to train 525 people to read in the next three years. Reading will unlock the Scripture in their own language, translated so many years ago. Lutheran Bible Translators is partnering with the “WALC” church to nurture Bible literacy through this new project. Ultimately, knowing God through reading the Bible will strengthen their faith and help them stand firm in the face of any persecution.