

# Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3

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Dear friends and family,

Just the other day we enjoyed the first rain of the season! What a JOY it is to hear the rain hit the zinc roof, to see the clearing of the dusty air, feeling the cool breeze, and the excitement of the coming of the new season. The beginning of rain marks the beginning of planting season in this farming community. As we start this new season, we also reflect on the last two months here in Gbintiri.

We arrived in Gbintiri the end of February. It was a full first few weeks of reunions for Michael and new introductions for Naomi. I, Naomi, was introduced to the local chief. I met the Bible translation team that Michael works very closely with. I also met many neighbors, church pastors, and church members. We worked at starting the process of settling into our home. We did a lot of cleaning, unpacking, figuring out meals we can eat with what is available, learning how to shop for 4-6 weeks at a time, and realizing the change in the structure of time, routine, and flexibility while adjusting to a dusty, hot, dry climate.

After our initial weeks, Michael started to go into the translation office a couple times a week, meeting with the translation team. During this time, I started spending more time in the community. I would get on my bike and peddle down the dirt road to a new adventure.

I have enjoyed watching women cook. I ask “Ba sɔɔ?” “What is this?” This helps me slowly learn new vocabulary. The community has adopted us, all looking out for us and becoming my teacher in both culture and language. I have learned basic greetings, how to say “thank you,” “pardon,” “water,” “I am riding my bicycle.” “He is at home.” “dog,” “sit,” “come,” “peanuts,” “What’s this?” “cassava,” “good/strong,” and “no.” I can understand a bit more but cannot yet speak it, for example: “Where are you going?” “husband,” more greetings, “You understand.” “You do not understand.” “name,” “corn,” and “okra.” It is a start to language learning.

I am also learning about the culture here. For example, I am learning how to appropriately dress for different situations, how to greet people from different social levels, and how to eat local food. I have been able to participate in many new activities. I enjoy going with Michael to the weekly market. One activity I enjoyed participating in was pounding a new dirt floor to make it a firmer surface. It is a woman’s task and I was excited to get to participate and learn alongside about 25 other women. We went from one side of a neighbor’s courtyard to the other, pounding. Water and cement were added, and the floor became firmer and firmer as we pounded.



*Naomi enjoyed getting to join some women as they pounded a neighbor’s floor (above). She has been on many adventures around Gbintiri with her bicycle (below).*







The translation team met for five full days to finish team proof-reading the draft of the minor prophets (above left). Michael was able to observe and learn as a new roof was put on a storage room on the mission grounds (above right).

Michael and the rest of the Komba translation team worked on proofreading the Komba text of Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the beginning of Job. These books have been sent to people in the community to proofread and provide feedback concerning the translation. After their comments are reviewed by the translation team, these books will then be ready for consultant checking. We are currently waiting to consultant check the books of Kings, Chronicles, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Obadiah. It has been a joy for Michael to introduce Naomi to the translation team, as well as many other friends and family in Komba land. We give thanks to God for the progress in the translation work.

Michael has also been busy overseeing some small to medium scale projects around the mission grounds. He needed to rig up some solutions to provide quick fixes for the water filter and a pipe in a bathroom sink. Some people came to replace a storage room's roof and to replace termite infested wood in a couple places in the mission house ceiling. A friend also came to removed bees from the ceiling of another building on the mission grounds. There is always something to do on the mission grounds!

Now, we look with excited eyes toward the farming season. We hope that we will be able to join friends and family in their fields as we plant, hoe, and harvest throughout the next six months. There is always much to learn, and life to live here: whether that is in the translation office, on the bicycle, in the house, or in the fields. We are so thankful God is always with us. He is also with you. May you rest in that comfort today.

Confident in Christ,  
Michael and Naomi Ersland

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## Prayer Requests

- Praise God for being able to start settling in to Gbintiri and for reconnecting/meeting with friends and family here
- Praise God for being able to finish team checking the minor prophets.
- Pray for us as we keep team checking.
- Pray for everyone here as the farming season begins. May God provide favorable weather for the fields.
- How may we pray for you? Please let us know so that we may be praying for you!

