

Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3

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Dear friends and family,

It's Naomi writing. Wow! A lot happened since our last newsletter! God is faithful in many ways. He orchestrates everything to provide and take care of us. I want to share some recent mini stories of God's provision.

~Things came together for us to return to Ghana in December. We weren't ready to leave family, but we were ready to be back in Gbintiri. We were able to return home a week before Christmas. The day we arrived, the translation team started consultant checking. Michael jumped right in while I went to work on settling into the house. We were eager to see people and Christmas was just a few days away. God provided strength, endurance, peace, and joyful reunions with the community.

~On Christmas Eve, we enjoyed an afternoon of calling family in the US and a few treats from the US. We joined the community on Christmas Day. We visited several homes, ate meat at 3 homes, gave out banana bread to a few families and attended a 4-hour church service in the village. It was a long, joyful day of celebrating Jesus' birth and the impact this has for all of us. There was lots of dancing in church, even grandma danced!

~The week after Christmas we got sick and stayed home. Michael worked on his thesis and made progress. We are thankful for his committee and their patience. We are thankful for God providing our basic needs since we did not anticipate extending our stay before returning to the city for supplies. God knows our needs. We are thankful for restored health.

~One day we needed to travel to a town an hour away. We got the car packed and then decided to call our contact person. He asked if we could come the following day. We were a little disappointed at first; we were all ready to get on the road. However, God knew something we did not. That day our cooking gas finished. We thought we had more cans of gas, but they had problems. So, we managed with some leftovers and town food that day. We called a few friends and learned that we can buy cooking gas an hour away from where we were planning to travel. The next day we made our first stop, and then we took another hour drive to pick up cooking gas. We made it home in time to make supper. God knew we needed to wait one more day so that we could get cooking gas.

~Michael spends as many days as he can in the office with the translation team, while I enjoy visiting women in the community. We both continue to work on relationships, learning language and culture. The translation team finished consultant checking 1 Chronicles in December and made it through part of 2 Chronicles. They are team checking Proverbs now.

~It is funeral season. Traditional practicing funerals occur this time of the year. We also had a few Christian burials and funerals in January.

~~The first burial was for a nephew of a close friend. We heard the news the morning he died. We stopped what we were doing and went to the house. The women were inside the house and the men were outside. The women were quiet, just sitting together. Some prepared the body while others made food and others provided support through their presence.



*Christmas Day (above and below).
We all celebrated Christ's birth and we
took turns dancing in church out of
thanksgiving and praise.*





We were able to join the Komba Christmas convention. This is the benediction (top left). This is the end of one funeral event, with people dancing in a circle and women carrying out from the center large containers and pots (top right).

Meanwhile, the men were outside digging the grave. Once the grave was dug and the body ready, the burial took place. Burials happen the same day of death. The young man's mother was not in town and couldn't be present. She arrived a couple days later and the next weekend we had the funeral.

~The second burial was for a neighboring community's Lutheran church chairman. He had been in an accident. He was first taken to one hospital and then transferred to a bigger city, where he died. It's been upsetting for the church and community. We are waiting to hear a date for the funeral.

~The other funeral we attended was a non-Christian, traditional funeral. Traditionally, there is a burial when the person dies, then funerals one and two year later. This was the final funeral. We attended the first and the third night. The first night was the grinding of sprouted millet used to make a drink, pito. The third day we arrived at 4am. There was a procession with drummers and women carrying a high stack of pots on their head. People joined in dancing and the dancing circle grew. The event ended after sunrise.

~During this time, my grandfather in the US also went to be with Jesus. He was a faithful servant as a Lutheran teacher and principle for many years. Many were blessed through him. We are thankful we were able to join the live streaming of his funeral. To God be the glory!

We are reminded in this funeral season of the presence of death and our need for God's Word. God's Word gives life to this death-stricken world. As St. John writes, "Very Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" John 5:24. We are thankful for the team of men we get to work with in the translation office and the church's involvement and eagerness. Thank you for your continued support and prayers! God provides! Confident in Christ,
Michael and Naomi Ersland

Prayer Requests

- Thanksgiving for a safe return to Ghana and the healing of our bodies when we were sick.
- Thanksgiving for all God provides.
- Please pray for our neighboring community's Lutheran church as they mourn the loss of their chairman.
- Continued prayers for the translation work and translation team as the continue to make progress.
- How may we pray for you? Please let us know so that we may be praying for you!

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