Praising God for His faithfulness throughout all generations.
We praise and thank You, Lord, for the work of the dedicated servants who have gone before us. Lord, You have been good, and we see Your faithfulness through the work of their hands. (Ephesians 4)

Guard and protect missionaries and their families who are currently serving in the field. Wherever You send them and whatever work You prepare for them, that You are with them. (Psalm 139)

Lord, over the partnership of Bible translation organizations we pray for unity of purpose. Pour out Your Spirit and ignite a passion for Your Word. (Psalm 90:17)

Father, we pray for local leaders, translation team members, literacy teams and all those involved in Scripture engagement. Provide for their every need and remove every barrier that hinders their work. (Hebrews 20:21)

The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Father, open hearts and minds, inspire and equip workers to assist with the work of Bible translation around the world. (Matthew 9:35-38)

And Father, for those who are waiting for Your Word. Sustain them in hope, uphold them, shelter and protect them, and comfort them. (Psalm 91)
FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Dear friends:

“GOD WAS ALREADY AT WORK.”

These words from former Executive Director Roy G. Gesch repeat in my mind.


This issue celebrates our history and turns to the future, where God is already working. I pray you see a thread woven through 60 years of Bible translation – God is FAITHFUL IN ALL. His faithfulness extends back to creation and forward to Jesus’ return. (Psalm 33:4)

Will you join me in two prayers?

First, a prayer of thanksgiving. He is worthy of praise!

Second, prayerfully consider a 60th-anniversary financial gift.

Your support is vital if Bible translation ministry is to reach every language by 2033. Just as God called hundreds before us to Lutheran Bible Translators through service and support, He calls you and me now.

Thank you for being a partner in the global mission, where God is already at work.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Rich Rudowske
Executive Director + CEO

On the cover, God’s Word is for all Generations
Photo credit: Jessica Albers
When war came, and missionaries had to evacuate, the team made several pivotal decisions. “Ngaima said, ‘We [Liberians] need to form our own organization,’ and that’s when LIBTRALO (Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization) was born,” Laesch explains.

With LIBTRALO entirely run by local Liberian Christians, Laesch continued in a consulting capacity. But that effort wasn’t without challenges. “So, I would fly into Liberia. The airline would only sell me a one-way ticket. On arrival, I had to buy another ticket to get out. That was a strange feeling, you know?” Years of dedicated Bible reading fortified his trust in the Lord through the twists and turns. “I do not need to worry. I do not need to solve every problem. I can call upon God for His protection, thanking Him for placing me into His hands. If something bad happens to me, He knows.”

“A workshop was going on [in Liberia]...and we heard gunfire throughout the night. So, we hunkered down,” Jim Laesch recalls. Despite the danger, they continued and completed the workshop a few days later.

“...and that’s when LIBTRALO was born.”

Laesch is calm in his retelling, steady after years of seeing God work - even in hardship and war. Laesch also had strong bonds with local Christians like Mr. Jaa Ngaima Kawala (a Bandi translator) and C. Bloty Necollin. “I never felt in great danger; I trusted their advice. Nothing bad happened to me, but we often had to make quick decisions on the spot.”

“[God] can work all things out for good eventually, even when there’s hardship...even when there’s war...”

When war came, and missionaries had to evacuate, the team made several pivotal decisions. “Ngaima said, ‘We [Liberians] need to form our own organization,’ and that’s when LIBTRALO (Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization) was born,” Laesch explains.

With LIBTRALO entirely run by local Liberian Christians, Laesch continued in a consulting capacity. But that effort wasn’t without challenges. “So, I would fly into Liberia. The airline would only sell me a one-way ticket. On arrival, I had to buy another ticket to get out. That was a strange feeling, you know?” Years of dedicated Bible reading fortified his trust in the Lord through the twists and turns. “I do not need to worry. I do not need to solve every problem. I can call upon God for His protection, thanking Him for placing me into His hands. If something bad happens to me, He knows.”
IN PHILIPPIANS 1:6 WE ARE REASSURED THAT, “HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL CARRY IT ON TO COMPLETION UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS.”

The next pages feature a timeline of God’s faithfulness during the past six decades of the Lutheran Bible Translators’ story. From our first completed New Testament translation with the Yessan-Mayo language community, through several cross-country home office moves, and in our current five-year goal of expanding from 72 language programs to 144, we see God at work.

As we reflect on His provision and protection in the past, we also look forward to the future in faith, trusting that the God who has been faithful will continue to guide us. Not only will He fulfill His work in us, but He will also lead us toward the work He has prepared for us to accomplish.
1974 LBT begins work in Sierra Leone

May 15, 1974 LBT purchases headquarters building in Orange, CA

1974 LBT Canada started

1974 First VITAL (Vacation Institute for Training in Applied Linguistics) conducted by LBT in Liberia

1974 LBT purchases first airplane, named TILLY

1974 The Institute for Sierra Leonean Languages formed

1978 LBT begins work in Cameroon

1980 First publication - Yessan-Mayo NT in Papua New Guinea

1981 LBT Australia established (LBT Australia closed in 2016)

1982 LBT begins translation work in Ecuador

1982 LBT film ‘And It Was Good Soup’ wins Silver Angel Award

Helen Marten - Papua New Guinea

1983 Loko and Limba NTs completed in Sierra Leone
1984 Krio NT completed
1984 LBT’s Executive Director, Dr. Morris Watkins makes presentation at Capitol Hill Luncheon in Washington, D.C.
1985 LBT Service Center in Aurora, IL, dedicated
1988 Belleh NT completed in Liberia

1989 LBT celebrates 25th anniversary!
1989 Grebo NT completed in Liberia
1989 Civil war breaks out in Liberia. LBT missionaries evacuated.
1989 Texmelucan Zapotec NT completed in Mexico

1990 Radio literacy classes begin in the Vai Language of Liberia
1990 Kisi NT completed in Liberia
1991 LBT begins work in Botswana and Namibia
1992 LBT missionaries evacuated from Sierra Leone due to civil war
1993 Bine NT completed in Papua New Guinea
1994 LBT founder Dr. Morris Watkins passes away

1995 LBT missionaries evacuated from Sierra Leone for 2nd time

1995 Launching of LIBTRALO (Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization)

1995 LBT hosts an audio Scripture seminar attended by six mission organizations

1997 Anyi NT is dedicated in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

1997 Quichua Cañar NT dedicated in Ecuador

1996 Dhimba Translation Committee formed in Namibia

1999 Kalanga NT completed in Botswana

1996 Yawu NT dedication in Papua New Guinea

2000 Uspanteco NT is dedicated in Guatemala

2000 Mada NT dedicated in Nigeria

2000 Western Krahn NT dedicated in Liberia

2001 Samba NT dedicated in Cameroon

2001 Bukawa NT dedicated in Papua New Guinea

2003 Vai NT dedicated in Liberia

2006 Kobon NT dedicated in Papua New Guinea

2006 Kwanja NT dedicated in Cameroon

2008 Kono NT dedicated in Sierra Leone

2009 Minimib NT dedicated in Papua New Guinea

2011 Quichua Cañar OT dedicated Ecuador

2012 LBT begins work in Ethiopia

2012 The JESUS Film is dubbed into 6 languages in the Ogoja region of Nigeria

2006 Kriol NT dedicated in Australia

2007 Vute NT dedicated in Cameroon

2007 Ayta Mag-Anchi NT dedicated in the Philippines

2007 Anufo NT dedicated in Ghana

2008 Moba NT dedicated in Togo

2008 Ipili NT dedicated in Papua New Guinea

2009 Audio Recording of Ipili NT in Papua New Guinea

2010 Haruai NT dedicated in Papua New Guinea

2011 LBT begins work in Zambia

2013 Krio Bible dedicated in Sierra Leone

2013 Dhimba dedication celebration

2013 March 2013 Ogoja Training Workshop

2009-2013 Logo Summer 2024
2014 Komba NT dedicated in Ghana
2014 Full Kisi Bible dedicated in Liberia

2014 LBT joins illumiNations - a global impact alliance of Bible translation agencies
2014 Ebola outbreak forces evacuation of missionaries in Liberia and Sierra Leone
2014 Full Kpelle Bible dedicated in Liberia

2015 Reformation Sunday, October 25th International Office dedicated in Concordia, MO
2016 Nsenga NT dedicated in Zambia
2016 LBT begins work in Tanzania
2018 Full Kalanga Bible dedicated in Botswana

2020 Gola NT dedicated in Liberia
2022 Scripture Engagement dedicated in Ethiopia
2022 Full Hadiyaa Bible Dedicated in Ethiopia

2022 First class of Bible Translation students graduates from Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia
2024 Full Konso Bible Dedicated in Ethiopia
2024 Shekgalagari NT Dedicated in Botswana

2023–Present Logo
When civil war broke out in Liberia in 1989, Lutheran Bible Translators’ missionaries faced the terrifying reality of violence and were forced to evacuate the country for safety. It’s estimated that 200,000 people were killed and around 1 million people displaced during the turmoil.

Alvina Federwitz was one of Lutheran Bible Translators’ missionaries in Liberia at the time when war broke out. When asked during an Essentially Translatable Podcast interview what ways can people get involved right where they are, she answered. “Prayer. Prayer has brought us through so many challenges. It’s brought us through a civil war, it’s brought us through learning a new language, it’s brought us through just the challenges of ministry.”

As the missionaries and their families settled in other areas and began work with other programs, God showed a glimmer of light during that devastatingly dark season. The Kalanga language community in Botswana had not been on the Lutheran Bible Translators’ program list. Because of the war in Liberia, the efforts of several dedicated missionaries were now available to be directed to Botswana to support the Kalanga in their translation efforts. In 1999, the completed Kalanga New Testament was dedicated to the glory of God. Nineteen years later, God continued the work He began for the Kalanga community with the completion and dedication of a full Bible translation.

Two civil wars disrupted Bible translation efforts in Liberia between 1989-2003. When peace was restored to the country, translation work was also revived and God again made a way for the work that was started to be finished. The complete Bible is now available for the Kpelle and Kisi languages, the Vai and Bandi New Testaments were also printed and as of today three Bible translation programs (Bandi, Dan, and Maan) continue, as well as literacy programs to promote reading and use of newly translated Bibles.

Even in the midst of the most terrible storms of life, God is faithful. In the darkest of circumstances, His will for His people stands firm. We have the Word of God as a testament of His faithfulness through the generations. His story continues as He works through His people today. 

“BEHOLD, I AM DOING A NEW THING; NOW IT SPRINGS FORTH, DO YOU NOT PERCEIVE IT? I WILL MAKE A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS AND RIVERS IN THE DESERT.” —ISAIAH 43:19
Missionaries Dale and Alvina Federwitz with their 4 children in 1980. (left to right) Paul, Jonathan, Rebecca and David.

As adults, all 4 continue to support Bible translation in various careers as teachers and directors. See where they are now at lbt.org/missionaries

Rich Rudowske in his early years working as a missionary in Botswana to establish the Shekgalagari Bible translation project.

Rich now serves as CEO of Lutheran Bible Translators. Earlier this year, he was a presenter at the dedication of the Shekgalagari New Testament.

The first ever publication of The Messenger, dated November 1974. This year is the Messenger’s 50th anniversary! Read it on lbt.org/messenger-50th
In “Meditation on a Toolshed,” C.S. Lewis illustrates a simple yet profound insight into how we perceive and experience the world. “You get one experience of a thing when you look along it and another when you look at it.” Lewis goes on to describe how a psychologist studies pain. He can learn all about what pain is, but until he experiences pain for himself, he will be left without full understanding.

During my recent trip to Botswana for the Shekgalagari New Testament dedication, I was able to see Bible translation work from the inside for the first time. The people were overjoyed, shouting, “God speaks Shekgalagari!”

Throughout the celebration ceremony, the assembly broke into song and dance; the spirit of praise palpable. There was a moment of realization of what I was witnessing, this powerful experience of recognition and connection; these people felt known and heard by God. It was a vivid reminder that the connection with God we so deeply desire can be hindered and even lost in translation.

God speaks Shekgalagari!

When we attended worship the next day at the Lutheran church in Kang, the congregation heard the Word of God read out loud in Shekgalagari. With every word read, you could feel the significance, the weight, of what it meant to hear those beautiful, life-giving words absorbing deep into hearts so thirsty for Him. The reactions of the congregation, the quiet ‘Ohs’ and ‘Ahs’ murmured by those in attendance, testified to the depth of connection and comprehension they were experiencing for the first time.

This moment was the culmination of years of effort in Bible translation work. Seeing the joy on people’s faces and witnessing the relief of completing this massive project will serve as a humbling reminder to never take for granted the gift I have in unhindered access to Scripture. Through this experience, I was able to ‘look along’, as C.S. Lewis would say, the impact of Bible translation through the eyes of the Bakalagari people. My prayer is that the Lord will ignite His church to work with unified purpose: to make His Word known to every people, in every language.
Contributions are solicited with the understanding that Lutheran Bible Translators has complete discretion and control over the use of all donated funds. Lutheran Bible Translators will attempt to honor gifts preferenced to support particular workers, but the final decision on the use of all funds rests with the organization.

Lutheran Bible Translators is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization and your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

To view Lutheran Bible Translators’ financial reports, visit lbt.org/financial-accountability.

Rich Rudowske noted in the opening letter, God is already at work. God is working in 2025, arranging conversation, guiding hearts, and reaching the next generation.

Your prayers and financial support empower Lutheran Bible Translators to move strongly in its 60th year.

$35 translates one verse of Scripture. $1,000 translates a full chapter.

To whichever level God leads you, we are blessed to call you a partner in this mission.

Member Information

Lutheran Bible Translators bylaws define who may vote and give you a chance to participate in nominating and electing the Board of Directors as well as participate in changes to the Lutheran Bible Translators bylaws (charter document).

To see if you are eligible to be a voting member please visit LBT.org/members. Here you will also find:

• Information about the 2024 election for the Board of Directors
• Details on how to request nomination and voting information for the 2024 election
• Information about the Annual General Meeting

Thank you for participating in mission through your membership.
A 60TH ANNIVERSARY GIFT
GIVE THE GIFT OF A FIRM FOUNDATION

God’s Word leads.

The Lutheran world is blessed with powerful, relationship-building, life-changing ministries: family life, trauma healing, worship resourcing, leadership training, refugee outreach, and so much more.

And why do Lutherans engage in missions?

The Gospel message has brought hope, life, and transformation to us, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we’ve been led to see every tribe and every nation come to the saving knowledge of the Truth.

By 2033, the alliance of Bible translation agencies, illumiNations, seeks to bring a portion of Scripture to EVERY language community.

Again, why should Lutherans engage? We strongly desire to bring the richness of Scriptures and, if God wills, the depth of the Lutheran confession to every language community.

Lutheran mission does not end when the Bible is translated into every language, it’s just beginning. For the success of every Lutheran global ministry, it’s vital that God’s Word lead. Faith takes root in the firm foundation of God’s Word.

Help Lutheran Bible Translators go first, to build relationships with communities around the world, which can lead to opportunity for every Lutheran mission. One ongoing prayer is the bridge between Lutheran ministries to grow ever stronger and that every mission be built on God’s Holy Word.

Your 60th anniversary gift is a celebration of God’s faithfulness and a commitment to Lutheran mission opportunities.

Prayerfully considering how God is calling you to step up your support in this crucial time.
SUPPORT BIBLE TRANSLATION THROUGH GIVING

1. **Give an Anniversary Gift**
   
   $35 translates one verse of Scripture. Give the gift of God’s Word at [lbt.org/give](http://lbt.org/give).

2. **Monthly Support**
   
   With monthly giving, you can ensure that projects are funded now and in the future.

3. **Plan Your Impact**
   
   Do you have investments like stocks, IRA’s, or life insurance? You may be able to make them work for you while also contributing to Lutheran Bible Translators.