



Living Letters

2 Corinthians 3



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Dear Family and Friends,

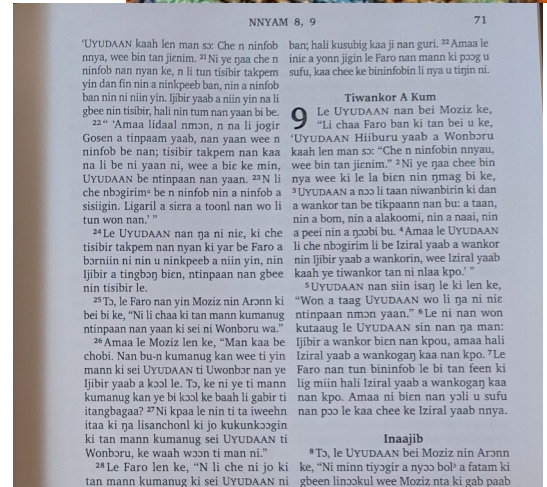
Jesus is born! What joy and excitement we experienced this year with our children—it was the 1st Christmas in the US with our toddler and the 1st Christmas for our baby! There was joy as we celebrated with parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, and church family. It brought new experiences for our children including going to Advent services, driving at night to see Christmas lights and being reminded that Jesus is the light of the world, seeing Christmas trees that remind us Jesus gives us life, and sharing the good news of His birth through caroling. We missed being with family the last few years!

We also feel a sense of loss over what we left behind in Ghana. We miss the way Christmas is celebrated in Komba land: the 4 hour service, the dancing, Christmas convention, visiting our friends' homes, and eating together. The feeling of loss reminds us of this imperfect world and our yearning for the day that we will be together in heaven with Jesus where there will be no more loss. As we process and mourn our goodbyes, Christmas tastes all the sweeter. Since Jesus was born, we have hope!

We returned to Ghana in October after a short trip to the US for medical check-ups for our children. Michael met with the translators to do some checks of the manuscript before sending it back to the printers and to set up the team to check the deuterocanonical books of the Catholic Bible. Michael also worked on his MA thesis in applied linguistics and passed his defense. We packed up our home and said goodbye to churches and individuals. It was a full six weeks!

We arrived in the US at the beginning of December. We have been catching up on many things that we put on hold while we were in Ghana. This includes post-thesis defense work, sabbatical prep, assessments for a program we will attend in January, expense reports, this newsletter, sending out thank you notes, and seeing family.

It's been a very full season for us, and we are tired. We are thankful that Lutheran Bible Translators recommended a transition program for us and a time for sabbatical. In January 2025, we will be in MI for the transition program. Then, we will be in KS for our sabbatical. We will start traveling the US visiting churches and individuals in July (post-sabbatical). We are thankful for those who have reached out about housing and a vehicle, and we are so very thankful for what God has provided! We look forward to seeing some of you during our sabbatical and connecting with more of you after it (after July).



We mainly looked for formatting errors with the manuscript. For example, here in Exodus, the headings for the plagues were supposed to be italicized and not bold. (Above) We visited many churches, individuals, and organizations in 6 weeks as we celebrated our relationships. Pictured below we are with the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana.





We are grateful for numerous people we have lived and worked alongside in Ghana. Michael worked with this group of men in the office. They are leaders, fathers, grandfathers, brothers, uncles, teachers, pastors, and more. On our first day as a couple in 2021, we took a selfie outside our house. Here is our last day.

We want to share a little about our sabbatical. Lutheran Bible Translators' advice to take one is a gift and we will continue with them during it. We are following a structure used by another mission organization which has 5 phases.

1. **Planning:** we prepared for the sabbatical.
2. **Rest and recovery:** we will stop ministry activities and some stressors. We will participate in activities that restore and nourish our family.
3. **Reflect and refocus:** we will focus on time alone with God in his Word, in prayer, and in reflection on what he is saying.
4. **Realignment and/or reassignment:** we will ask God for direction about changes in life and ministry.
5. **Re-entry and re-engagement:** we will transition back to ministry. We have a sabbatical coach we will meet with monthly and 2 support couples that we will meet with twice a month. We have goals for each phase and accountability to our sabbatical team. During our sabbatical, we will not write newsletters or other forms of communication. We may visit a few churches or reach out about our post-sabbatical visits during our re-entry phase. Our sabbatical is an intentional time for rest, healing, and preparing our hearts and minds for where God will send us next with Lutheran Bible Translators.

Thank you for your continued support and prayer. May God fill your hearts with joy as we know that Jesus came to make all things new. He takes our loss and gives us hope. Jesus came and took our sin to the cross, and he will come again to end separation and loss.

Confident in Christ,
Naomi and Michael Ersland

Prayer Requests

- Praise for 8.5 years of work in Ghana, our friends, family, and community.
- Praise for 5 years of marriage and our 2 children.
- Pray for us as we process our transition from Ghana, mourn losses that come with this, and as we look to God's guidance for where he is leading us next.
- Pray that the process will speed up for the Komba Bible to be printed and shipped.
- How may we pray for you? Please let us know so that we may be praying for you!

Contributions:
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Checks written to Lutheran Bible Translators with *Ersland Ministry* on the memo line. You can also give online at LBT.org

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