



ISAIAH 52:15; ROMANS 15:21

FALL/WINTER 2025

Hi, Team! Elijah (13), Zay (11), and I spent three weeks of August together in Tanzania, checking in with the Kerewe* translation team on Ukerewe Island and attending an Oral Bible Storying Workshop in Mwanza. It was the boys' first time back overseas since leaving Sierra Leone in 2020, and they loved it. Their days were filled with making friends, playing soccer, and exploring. Our church kindly sent soccer balls, children's Bible story books, dolls, and matchbox cars as gifts to churches and families. Elijah chose John 20:31 to print and share.



"Nawe enyamo zinu zikayandikwa muhiche kwikilizya okwo Yezu niwe Kristo, Omwana wa Namuhanga, na kulaba mulikilizya elyo, mube no obulame mwi izina lya wenene." - Yohana 20:31 (Kikerewe, BBTP)

"Lakini hizi zimeandikwa ili mpatie kuamini ya kwamba Yesu ndiye Kristo, Mwana wa Mungu; na kwa kuamini mwe na uzima kwa jina lake." - Yohana 20:31 (Kiswahili, SUV)

"But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name." - John 20:31 (English, NRSV)

ORAL BIBLE STORYTELLING (OBS)

Last year Lutheran Bible Translators and the two diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania adopted a strategy called Oral Bible Storytelling (OBS). This has been an effective approach to introduce communities to God's Word. In August, I participated in a workshop where teams from different language communities (Taturu, Kerewe, Sakuma, Sumbwa, and Kara) came together to craft stories from *Genesis* into their languages. These stories are then taken back to their communities, shared, and taught, so that they can touch people's lives and plant seeds of desire for more of God's Word.

RUTHIE'S MOM

On September 29, my mom, Margaret Lee, went to USC Norris to begin a NETs cancer immunotherapy trial. Unfortunately, she went into septic shock due

*Kikerewe is spoken on Ukerewe Island on Lake Victoria on the northwestern border of Tanzania. There are around 400,000 speakers of the language. Books completed: *Genesis, Leviticus, Ruth, Jonah, Gospels, Acts, Jude*. In Progress: *Exodus*. Up Next: *Numbers*.

Are you new to Wagner Updates? Please introduce yourself and contact us if you have any questions about our ministry.



WHO WE ARE

The Wagner Family first served in Sierra Leone alongside the Themne people in Translation & Scripture Use. Now Ruthie is a Translation Development Specialist and a Consultant-in-Training, based in Minnesota and travels several times a year doing training.

Making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. (LBT's Mission)

TIMELINE

- AUG Ruthie's birthday on the 6th; trip to Tanzania Aug 12-31 for translation and Oral Bible Storying workshop
- SEPT Kids start school; Ruthie continues studies for DMin and works remotely
- OCT Lizzie's 8th birthday on the 9th; Bible Translation Conference in Thailand (virtual); Ruthie studying, working, and helping care for her mom in CA
- NOV Ruthie studying for DMin and working from MN & CA; 16th wedding anniversary on the 21st
- DEC- Ruthie studying for DMin and working; Josiah's 10th birthday on Dec 21st; Josh's birthday on Dec 24th

TAKE ACTION

JOIN our "Wagner Updates" group
facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates

GIVE to "Wagner Ministry" online or by mailing a check. lbt.org/wagner

PRaise for progress on the Kerewe Bible Translation Program and fruitful efforts with Oral Bible Storying in five languages!

PRay for Bible translation in Tanzania. Pray for Ruthie's work and studies. Pray for Josh and the kids. Pray for Ruthie's mom (cancer).

CONTACT/SUPPORT

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to unknown underlying infection. She spent 12 days in the ICU. My siblings and I were able to fly in from Northern California, Alaska, Brazil, and Minnesota. We praise God for sparing her, and we ask for prayers as she continues with rehabilitation and treatment. I'm traveling to the Los Angeles area periodically to spend time with her and help my dad with her care.

BIBLE TRANSLATION CONFERENCE

I participated virtually in the Bible Translation Conference this year in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I was able to present my paper "Results of Local Ownership: Using the Agile Mindset for Translation Quality & Scripture Engagement." It is a case study of my research and work from this past year, so it was a great deal of work to write, but also a tremendous joy and honor to share the story of what God is doing on Ukerewe Island in Tanzania and more broadly in Bible translation.



Storyteller telling a story from Genesis at the Oral Bible Storytelling Workshop

WHAT'S NEXT?

I've been traveling between Minnesota and California, spending time with and helping my dad care for my mom as she undergoes rehabilitation and fights cancer. Thankfully I'm familiar with remote work and studies, so it all continues. Currently, Lutheran Bible Translators has me working on researching and testing more innovative developments in Bible translation. Please pray for wisdom!

Thank you so much for your care and support for our family and the work of Bible Translation!

♥ Ruthie & Josh Wagner ~ Elijah (13), Zay (11), Josiah, (9.5), & Lizzie (8)

DOCTORATE OF MINISTRY • BIBLE TRANSLATION

Ruthie, why are you getting a doctorate?



One of the requirements of getting certified as a Translation Consultant in Lutheran Bible Translators is holding a type of doctorate, and I have been asked to prioritize getting this certification.

Why did you choose this program?

I wanted a conservative, evangelical school committed to the authority of Scripture and mission of the Gospel. Being ecumenical and internationally diverse were also benefits. I wanted a program that could be done remotely in conjunction with my work. I have three colleagues in Lutheran Bible Translators who have had good experiences with this program and are now serving as Translation Consultants. **The program is crafted for students working full-time in Bible translation** and my classmates are from and/or serve around the world.

If you're attending a seminary, will you get ordained?

No. While there are some overlapping topics, such as biblical interpretation, my focus is on the context of Bible translation.

How long is it going to take you to finish?

I've started my second year of three years of coursework! After the three years I need to complete my final project, which is not

as extensive as a typical dissertation, but will certainly take time, likely another year. I hope to complete my program in 2028/2029.

Ruthie, how can I pray for you in your studies?

There is much to read, write, discuss, and learn! It feels impossible to do it all and prioritizing is crucial. Please pray for wisdom and focus. May the Lord bring to light what would be most beneficial for my work, further development, and contribution to this field of Bible translation. Pray also for my family as we figure out how to support one another.

What are some of the books you are reading?

My first year focused on Biblical Interpretation and Theology in Global and Historical Contexts. We focused on context and language—how theology, history, and culture shape both Scripture and its translation. We studied methods and approaches—looking at hermeneutics, ethics, and the global Church, and how all of these influence the way we interpret and translate the Bible. From my recent reading, I would recommend:

Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien.

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible. (SHORTER BOOK)

deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture.* (LONGER BOOK)