



**May God bless you and your family with the joy of knowing our Savior who has come!**

*Jim & Susan*

## BIBLE TRANSLATION CONFERENCE

For the first time, the bi-annual international Bible translation conference was held outside the US. BT 2025 was held in Thailand October 28-31, and since it was not in the US, many more of our international partners were able to obtain visas and attend it. Lutheran Bible Translators facilitated the attendance of church leaders from Cameroun, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Papua New Guinea. They joined us in attending the sessions and discussing what was significant for them. All of the attendees expressed how much they had learned and were thankful to be able to participate.



One of the major topics at the Bible translation conference was AI and its role in translating the Bible. A difficulty in applying AI is that written material must first exist in the language in order to properly train AI on it. For most of the languages we work with, there is nothing written down in it. Often, there is not even an existing alphabet. This limits the use of AI to languages that have some Bible translation done, or that have taken the time to write down a significant amount of cultural stories and materials.

One of the main conclusions is that AI should only be used to prepare a very rough draft. A human translator needed to evaluate what it produced and make the final decision on how to translate the passage. There are two main AI versions that have been developed for Bible translation. Testing shows that one seems to be better at translating non-poetry sections of the Bible, while the other is better at poetry. One recommendation was that translators should refer to both when drafting their translation, but not copy directly from either.

The group from Lutheran Bible Translators took part of our first day before the conference started to visit an elephant camp. This was a place that cared for retired work elephants. So the elephants were very tame and had spent their whole lives around people. We were able to get up close and personal with them, giving them food, washing them, and petting them.

*Left: Guests and staff of Lutheran Bible Translators at the conference.*

*Right: Jim with one of the elephants at the camp.*



## TRANSLATION CHECKING

The Mende team (from Sierra Leone) is making very good progress. I met with them online to check their translation material in September and November. We are currently working on the book of Isaiah and have reached chapter 36.

I have enjoyed getting to know the Kono team (Sierra Leone). We met online in September, October, and November to work on some of the minor prophets.

In October, I also worked two weeks with the Tsamakko team from Ethiopia. We were able to check over the last half of their translation of the book of Genesis.

## TRANSLATION TIDBITS

In Isaiah 30:10, an interesting figure of speech is used that ended up being said differently in the Hebrew, English, and Mende languages. The NRSV translates part of the verse as, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things...” This keeps the literal meaning of the Hebrew phrase “smooth things”. The NIV states it more naturally in English as “pleasant things”. When it was translated into Mende, this was most naturally said as “sweet things”. So the same idea is expressed using smooth, pleasant, and sweet, all giving the same meaning in their particular contexts.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for the Mende team (Sierra Leone) as they continue to work on their translation of the Old Testament and revision of the New Testament.
- Pray for the Kono team (Sierra Leone) as they continue to work on their translation of the Old Testament.
- Pray for the health of Kono translator Rev. Daniel Yarjah.
- Pray for online checking sessions scheduled with the Kono team January 12-16 and the Mende team January 26-30. Pray for good health, reliable electricity, good internet connection, wisdom, and guidance from the Holy Spirit for all involved.

In the Kono language, it is natural to use the liver in many figures of speech that have to do with emotions. It is often used in places where we would use “heart” in English. One example of that is Amos 2:16 “those who are stout of heart” ESV. In Kono, this is translated as “those who have strong livers”, which is how they speak of being brave.

In Genesis 27:44, the Hebrew language uses a figure of speech to describe Esau’s anger. Literally, it says, “until the anger of your brother returns.” In English, this sounds like Esau would get angry again, which is the wrong meaning. So English translations state it differently in order to give the correct meaning: “fury turns away” (NRSV); “fury subsides” (NIV); “anger cools down” (GW). But in the Tsamakko language, they have the same figure of speech as Hebrew, so they can say, “until the wrath of your brother returns,” and it has the proper meaning.



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