

FEDERWITZ UPDATE

Vol. 55 No. 1

Editor: Alvina Federwitz

Spring 2026

Easter Blessings

Easter Blessings! Even though the official celebration of Easter is over, we as Christians celebrate it every Sunday. Lent and Easter are my favorite times of the year, as they renew my hope that one day I will be in heaven, thanks to what Jesus earned for me through His horrible death and amazing resurrection.

The Way of Bible Translation is Changing

Fifty-five years ago, in June 1971, my late husband, Rev. Dale Federwitz, and I began our training as linguists so we could begin the work of Bible translation. Fortunately, we were both blessed with parents who were not rich in a worldly way but who prioritized being in the Word. This led us both to desire to serve the Lord in full-time ministry: Dale as a pastor and me as a deaconess, which opened the door for us to serve as missionaries. Dale's gifts in Biblical languages and my desire to get the Word out led us to Bible translation ministry.

That call made us realize that we needed help. We could not go without prayer and financial support. Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) was just a baby organization, being born in 1964, but it had the mechanics in place to help us meet that need. Over

the years, those of you reading this joined our team, and we all became part of numerous groups of people in Africa today who have God's Word in their heart language.

When we arrived in Liberia, West Africa, on Valentine's Day 1974, the government said there



Better Jallah presenting the chalk and Bible for one of the churches

were 16 languages, none of which had a single Word of God in their heart language. As linguistic missionaries, it soon became obvious that there were more languages than that. A survey LBT did indicated that just one language, called Grebo, was really 8 different languages.

Today, a good number of Liberian languages have God's Word in them thanks to the work of LBT missionaries in Liberia, but, as in every other place in the world, the job was too big for just foreign missionaries. Besides, if I'm honest with you, we missionaries never totally understood all the nuances, idioms, and cultural context of the people group we were working with, even though we gave it our best shot. Today, Liberians have been trained and have continued the work, and Bible translation and literacy work have continued there.

Just one of the many Liberians who has done this is Better Jallah, a Kpelle man. I met him online through LIBTRALO personnel. I was told he was very interested in helping his people learn to read the Kpelle Bible. LIBTRALO staff, who had been



One of the nine literacy classes

trained by me and other LBT missionaries, spent several years giving him the training to do this. LIBTRALO is the Liberian Bible Translation and Literacy Organization, with which I worked for many years. My LWML helped send money to Jallah for a motorcycle so he could reach the off-road areas where the Kpelle people live. My local church also sent money for Kpelle Bibles for the churches and for some of the training materials he uses in teaching Kpelle.

Just as my LWML played an important role in helping Jallah achieve his goal of connecting the Kpelle people to the Word, you have done that through your gifts and prayers for the work I have done all these years.

Most Bible translation work today is led by local speakers of the language, not outside translators. This approach helps ensure the translation sounds natural, communicates clearly, and is trusted by the community. This means that we, as people who have had God's Word available to us all our lives, need to make it possible for local people to get God's Word to their people who still do not have God's Word in their heart language. We also need missionaries to equip and train these local translators, to remember them in our prayers and in our gifts, and to praise God for people like Better Jallah.

The Kpelle Bible was the first Bible translated in Liberia. Seeing its use revived is so exciting and gives me hope for the people there who still do not have God's Word in their language.



One of the nine churches where Jallah has opened Kpelle literacy classes



Correspondence:

Alvina Federwitz
8001 Hope Ln; Waxhaw, NC 28173
704-806-6007 / Alvina.Federwitz@LBT.org

Contributions:

Lutheran Bible Translators
PO Box 789; Concordia, MO 64020-0789
800-532-4253 / 660-225-0810 / www.lbt.org

Lutheran Bible Translators
137 Queen St S; Kitchener ON, Canada; N2G 1W2
866-518-7071 / 519-742-3361 / www.lbtc.ca

Designate: *Alvina Federwitz Ministry*
or
620 LIBTRALO (Liberia Bible Translation & Literacy Organization)