

LBT the messenger

lutheran bible translators
GOD'S WORD
for every language

The President Wants to See You!

[Dr. Mike Rodewald]

MISSIONARY Alvina Federwitz (known locally as Ma Wata) was preparing to return to the U.S. after serving 42 years in Liberia and other parts of West Africa. In the midst of packing she received a phone call. Dr. McClain, protocol officer for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's president, informed her, "The president wants to see you before you leave Liberia."

Alvina saw an opportunity. "I wanted to make a statement that mother tongue education would not end when I leave Liberia," said Alvina. She asked for and received permission to bring David Setiyee, executive director of LBT's partner LIBTRALO (Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization), Jim Laesch, LBT's associate director of international programs, and professional colleague and friend Ma Hawah Goll-Kotchi, along. She wanted to introduce them to the president so that the efforts of LIBTRALO and those colleagues passionate about God's Word through Liberia's languages can continue with the blessing of the president even after Alvina leaves.

Alvina's life clearly demonstrates her heart to see Liberians be fully literate in both mother tongue languages and English so they can read and understand God's Word directly through Scripture. In her years

of service through LBT, she not only worked tirelessly towards that goal but raised a family of four children, struggled through civil wars and political instability, and lost her husband, Dale, to cancer. Serving in Liberia was not always easy, but in the process she gained many friends that have become as dear to her as family.

Alvina's colleague, Ma Hawah, was excited to be included in the audience with President Sirleaf. "It will give us an opportunity to show her the cellphone SD cards that LIBTRALO has available for Liberians to hear Scripture as well as traditional stories that teach cultural values that relate to Scriptural morals," she said before the visit.

While at the executive mansion, Alvina presented President Johnson Sirleaf with a collection of Gola traditional stories and the Vai New Testament in audio form. She also shared highlights from her 42 years of mission work in Liberia. President Sirleaf listened carefully to Alvina's comments and encouraged the executive director of LIBTRALO to keep working closely with Liberia's Ministry of Education.

This was not the first time Alvina met with the president. In 2007, both LIBTRALO and Alvina were honored by President Johnson Sirleaf for their accomplishments in promoting Liberia's mother tongues and multilingual education. Alvina was also conferred Liberia's Dame Grand Commander of the Humane Order of African Redemption.

At the end of the visit, President Sirleaf reiterated her appreciation, warmly saying, "Thank you Ma Wata for your service to the people of Liberia for such a long period of time. May God bless you as you leave us

Continued on page 5



WE MADE IT!

After months of planning and weeks of purging and packing, LBT moved into its new international offices in Concordia, Missouri, on September 4. To read more about our journey visit <http://us.lbt.org/category/move/>.

Read about the dedication events for the new office in the Winter 2016 Messenger.

inside

- 'Prepare the Way of the Lord, Make His Paths Straight'2
- "Teacher, Friend and Mother to the Community" 2
- The Work is Ready3
- "They Came to Serve"4
- Lutheran Bible Translators' Missionaries Honored by U.S. Kisi Community4
- Empowering Translators5
- Break Between the Testaments6

‘Prepare the Way of the Lord, Make His Paths Straight’

[Rev. Larry Johnson]

ONE of the texts often used during Advent services is the verse quoted in the title to this article. It comes from Mark 1. It is a reference to John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus’ arrival.

In a way, that verse describes what LBT’s partners here and overseas have been doing. You who have been praying for and supporting Lutheran Bible Translators have been ‘preparing the way’ for Jesus’ arrival into the hearts and minds of people. You have helped in translating the Scriptures for people who do not have them.

While I was serving on the field with the Kisi translation, the translation team and I knew that many people would never learn to read. A video of the book of Luke was recorded to give people access to God’s Word. Kisi churches began to show it.

As I was visiting with a group of people from Booya, the village where my family and I lived, one of the women there began to relate the story of the Holy week, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. I knew this woman well. She was a teenage girl when we first moved to Booya. She was not a Christian. Very rarely would she go to church. Yet here she sat relating this

Continued on page 6

“Teacher, Friend and Mother to the Community”

[Emily Wilson, LBT Staff]

“She is clothed with strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.”

Proverbs 31:25-26

Over the course of four decades of missionary service, Alvina Federwitz (Ma Wata) has been a living testimony to these verses. For those of you who know her personally, you are most likely nodding your head and smiling fondly. She has dedicated her life to make God’s Word in Scripture accessible in the heart languages of people in Africa. Amidst trials and loss, Alvina remained strong in the Lord and has shared her life of faith with everyone she meets. She glows when you ask her about the work of Bible translation and literacy, especially in Liberia.

As Alvina ends her ministry in Liberia and relocates to the United States, we asked some of her colleagues to share the impact Alvina has had in their lives.

“God Almighty has made our mother, Ma Wata, and sent her to us. She loves us, cares for us and shares with us everything that Christ has placed within her.”

Koko Andrew Barsay

“She not only gave us the Bible in our

language, but she continually shows us how God loves us. We consider her as our spiritual mother.”

David and Larpu Gayflor

“She is a real woman of God. Ma Wata has lived a true Christian life that should make LBT proud for who this woman is.”

Tamba Bundor—Kisi Literacy Spokesman/Act. Chairman

“Ma Wata always points out ways to make our organization self-sustaining. Ma Wata not only gives you fish, but she teaches you how to fish.

“Ma Wata has always fervently encouraged colleagues in prayer. Her testimonies of faith in God are so enthralling that if you work with Ma Wata and are not converted to faith in Christ, you never will be.”

Nyanatee Sayon, LIBTRALO Translation Director and LLEME Coordinator*

We give thanks to God for Alvina’s service in God’s mission in Africa, and we pray for her as she continues to participate in the United States. 



Alvina assisting with literacy materials at the Liberian Translation and Literacy Organization.

The Work is Ready

[Christina LaBoube]

“WE’LL be in the Kalahari Desert in a town of about 5,000 people. It’s on the main highway, about five hours from the capital and maybe six hours from the nearest LBT missionary.”

LBT missionaries Rob and Mical Hilbert and their two children evacuated from Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak in 2014. As they recovered from the trauma of the evacuation, they began studying at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL) in Dallas, Texas. Now, with a new baby and two new degrees received this November, they’re moving toward their next assignment: the Shekgalagari New Testament project in Kang, Botswana. Mical will be taking over retired LBT missionary John Strasen’s work as exegetical advisor. Rob will be working as the project coordinator, a role previously filled by Rev. Rich Rudowske, who is now serving as LBT’s director of international program ministries.

“The whole Shekgalagari project is very well organized,” Rob says. “It has an excellent Board of Advisors, who work with the translators and missionaries, reading over drafts, discussing the language, and handling logistics.” They also worked to raise local publicity for the project and, along with Rich Rudowske and John Strasen, helped to encourage community involvement.

Although many Shekgalagari people are Christians and know a good deal about the Bible, only the book of Luke has been published in Shekgalagari to date.

Rob and Mical visited Botswana earlier this year and attended a community testing of the first book of Timothy. “We sat under trees outside of a salt pan in the Kalahari desert, in a town south of where we’ll be living. The translators took turns reading, and the people listened. Then they answered questions about what they heard. The people were really excited about the Bible in their language,” Rob said.



Community testing of I Timothy

For we are **God’s workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus to **do good works**, which God prepared in advance **for us to do.**

Ephesians 2:10

“The only thing that was hard was that while we were sitting there in the desert under the trees, we were attacked by these mites—spidery bugs with lots of legs—that were biting us. They must’ve been biting the people listening, too. Mical had marks that stayed for weeks, and one translator went to the hospital to have the bites checked out, they were so bad. But everyone stayed and stuck it out, which just shows how important the translation is to them.”

Rob and Mical earned degrees in literacy and descriptive linguistics, respectively. They plan to leave for Botswana in January. In the meantime, they’re living in the moment—focused on school and their family, and looking forward to their upcoming move.

“Everything is ready for us to just step into it,” Rob says.

To learn more about the Hilberts or to support their ministry visit <http://us.lbt.org/project/rob-mical-hilbert/>. 



Rob and Mical Hilbert

“They Came to Serve”

Lutheran Bible Translators’ Missionaries Honored by U.S. Kisi Community

[Dr. Mike Rodewald]

WHEN civil war raged in Liberia from 1989-2003, its peoples searched for sanctuary. Some came to the United States. They gradually integrated into U.S. society, but they also kept speaking their mother tongues—the language in which they could best understand and express themselves in joy, happiness, sadness and relationship. Many who fled Liberia spoke Kisi (also spelled Kissi in some reference materials) a language spoken by almost a half million people.

LBT missionaries had been translating God’s Word even before the war. Despite the many challenges and setbacks faced through civil unrest and uncertainty, translation and literacy efforts continued. In 2014, the completed Kisi Bible was printed and shipped to Liberia. It was dedicated that November amid yet another crisis—Ebola—but that did not stop it from being distributed. It is now widely used where it has become available.

Those in the Kisi community who came to the U.S. became citizens, but they still honor their heritage and maintain close ties with family and friends here and abroad. When they learned that the Bible had become available in their homeland, they knew they, too, had to celebrate.

On July 19, Kisi speakers from all over the U.S. gathered in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. They gave thanks to God that His Word is now available in their language and prayed and sang in both English and their mother tongue. They also offered thanks to special guests, LBT missionaries Rev. Larry and Mae Johnson and Norm and Shirley Jaschen, who attended along with their families, including children and grandchildren.

Joseph Bimba, whose father, Rev. Fallah Bimba, was highly active in translation efforts within Liberia, acknowledged that living in the U.S. made him really understand what LBT missionaries had to give up to live and serve in Liberia those many years ago. “These missionaries came voluntarily to serve among the Kisi, giving up the comforts and advantages of living in the U.S. to live in a culture and environment so different from their own. They made sacrifices to bring God’s Word to the Kisi people, enduring mosquitoes, malaria, no electricity or plumbing, bad roads, and more.”



Rev. Larry and Mae Johnson and Norm and Shirley Jaschen were honored during the dedication.

Larry and Mae Johnson were first sent by Lutheran Bible Translators in 1973 to establish linguistic work among the Kisi and train a Kisi translation team for the New Testament translation project. Norm and Shirley Jaschen followed a year later to develop literacy materials and a literacy program in the Kisi language. Rev. Johnson later went on to serve as consultant for the Kisi Old Testament.

As a sign of appreciation, honor and respect, the Kisi community ceremoniously presented hand-woven country-cloth robes and ‘gowned’ Larry and Mae and Norm and Shirley for their service to the Kisi people. Forty Kisi Bibles brought from Liberia were purchased within minutes.

Lutheran Bible Translators gives thanks for the service of the Johnsons and the Jaschens as well as the many in the U.S. who prayed for and supported this ministry financially over the years. LBT also gives thanks for the Kisi community who faithfully participated towards this day when the whole Bible is in their hands.

GOD’S WORD IS FOR EVERY LANGUAGE.

To learn more about the Johnsons or to support their ministry, go to <http://us.lbt.org/project/rev-larry-mae-johnson/>. 

Empowering Translators

[Christina LaBoube]

EVER since they started work, Wayeyi translators Keene and Motswasele were happy in their jobs as Bible translators. As Christians with a love for God's Word—in Setswana and English—and a desire to see that Word expressed in their own Shiyeyi as well, they had considerable motivation from the start. Recently, Keene and Motswasele participated in The Word for the World translation training program.

"Before the training, Bible translation was a job that they were excited to do, though usually simply doing it however I instructed them to," says LBT missionary

Eshinee Veith, Shiyeyi language project coordinator. "But after their first month of training, they became more comfortable with giving their own perspective. These days, if they think something would be better than what I've suggested, they tell me. And I am excited to listen!"

The Word for the World is a Bible translation organization with a training program designed to equip local Bible translators. Translators take a break from their translation work to spend one month each year in classes held in Zambia. After three years, they'll have earned a Diploma in Bible Translation, accredited by South African Theological Seminary (SATS) in South Africa.

The program courses are uniquely geared toward training Bible translators in the context of southern Africa. The homework the translators take home between sessions is extensive. "Last year the first year students did language surveys in their home villages, since part of the program is planning a translation project. That's something that is typically done before a translation project is even started," Eshinee says. "Even though our project had already begun and some survey work was done in the past, I learned a lot from Motswasele and Keene's new surveys. People sometimes interact differently with you if you approach them from the 'outside.' Being from within the Wayeyi community, the translators were able to interact more openly and directly with survey respondents."

One advantage of this Word for the World group training is the opportunity to interact and learn from other translators working in other projects.

"The translators are not feeling so isolated anymore," Eshinee explains. "Each LBT translation project typically only has two or three people working on it—someone from LBT, plus a few people from the language community. Botswana has four active LBT projects, but they're about a five hour drive apart from each other, so we can't have a lot of face-to-face interaction on a regular basis. People in the language community are supportive of the project, but they can't really understand what it's like to be translating the Bible.

"The translators can't even talk to me as someone who understands their work, because I don't share their perspective. I already have the Word in my language, so I cannot experience the challenges of doing that first translation into my language. It's like someone who doesn't have children trying to understand what it's like

The President Wants To See You!

Continued from page 5



President of Liberia says G left to right Ma Hawah, Alvina, President Sirleaf, David Setiyee, Jim Laesch oodbye to Ma Wata

and return to the United States. The nation of Liberia is thankful for all your contributions."

There are 31 languages spoken in this West African country. LBT and LIBTRALO serve mother tongue translation, literacy and oral Scripture distribution efforts in 14 of those languages.

Alvina 'Ma Wata' Federwitz will continue serving through Lutheran Bible Translators by connecting with those passionate about serving the vision of God's Word for every language through prayer and gifting. In this way the work in Liberia shall continue even as she is no longer present. To find out how to support the vision of Lutheran Bible Translators in Liberia or other parts of the world where LBT missionaries are serving, visit lbt.org. 

Continued on page 7

Break Between the Testaments

[Christina LaBoube]

THE Pluger family has returned to Zambia after furlough in the U.S. to begin work on the Old Testament in Nsenga. The Nsenga New Testament dedication is scheduled for July 2016.

Work on the Nsenga New Testament was completed several months ago. The Nsenga translation team begins work on the Old Testament this month.

“Translating the Old Testament should be a lot like translating the New Testament,” says LBT missionary Chris Pluger. “But of course the Old Testament will present some new challenges.

“We’re familiar with the translation process now,” Chris says, “but the language and style of the Old Testament are in some ways much more difficult than New Testament Greek.” Chris’s main role on the team is to compare the new Nsenga translation to the Bible in its original languages to be sure the new translation accurately conveys God’s Word.

One challenge is that the Old Testament contains a lot more poetry, proverbs, and prophesy—genres in which the literary style of the text significantly contributes to the meaning. The Nsenga team will have to decide whether to preserve the original Hebrew style of the poetry or to “translate” the style as well so that it sounds like poetry to the Nsenga people. While on furlough early in 2015, Chris earned his master’s degree from the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL) in Dallas, Texas. His thesis explored using Nsenga proverbs as a model for translating Biblical proverbs. Looking forward to this poetic challenge, he comments, “No one is going to argue that translating Job is harder than translating Matthew.”

Additionally, the Old Testament is just plain longer than the New Testament. “It took us three years to the day to translate the New Testament—July 1, 2012 to July 1, 2015. If we translate the Old Testament at the same pace, it will take us about eight or nine years,” Chris remarks.

Between finishing the New Testament translation work in July and beginning the Old Testament work in November, the translation team itself is also seeing some changes.

The Plugers have returned to Zambia, but their son, Sean, is in Kenya. Homeschooled for three years, he’s now off to boarding school for eighth grade, making his parents temporary “empty nesters.”

Two of the translators that worked on the New Testament are no longer with the project, so the

committee has hired two more to take their place. In addition to moving their families to the central Nsenga town where the translation office is located, these new teammates are busy brushing up on translation techniques,

learning to use Bible translation software, and, to get a feel for the style of written Nsenga, they’re reading the whole New Testament as part of their “homework.”

The last member of the translation team will come off of maternity leave just in time to begin work with the others. Her new baby was born just four days after the New Testament translation was completed. **LBT**

Learn more about the Plugers at <http://us.lbt.org/project/chris-janine-pluger/>. Be sure to read their blog.



Prepare the Way

Continued from page 2

story perhaps as well, if not better, than I could have recounted!

I sat there quite surprised at what I was hearing. When she ended the story, I asked her how she came to know it. She told me she had gone to a church that was showing the Luke video. Those Scriptures in her own language were ‘preparing the way’ for the Lord to reveal Himself to her as her Savior.

Today that woman is a very strong Christian. Your prayers and support were helping to make ‘the path straight’ so she and hundreds like her would one day know Jesus as their Savior.

We praise God for the many who will be able to read and hear Mark 1 in their own languages this Christmas. And we pray for those who are still waiting to learn about the Christ Child, whose coming has changed the hearts and lives of countless individuals. Blessings to you this Advent season. **LBT**

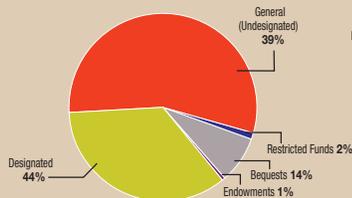
LBT PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

July 1 — September 30, 2015

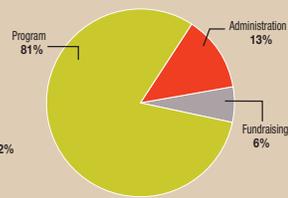
INCOME

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
Designated	\$ 346,310	\$ 1,115,815
General (Undesignated)	305,123	1,133,374
Restricted Funds	11,272	50,981
Bequests	107,169	254,773
Endowments	11,235	11,485
Total Income	\$ 781,109	\$ 2,566,429

3rd Quarter Income



3rd Quarter Expenses



EXPENSES

	3rd Quarter	Year-to-date
Program	\$ 756,765	\$ 2,466,978
Administration	126,608	415,857
Fundraising	55,313	162,425
Total Expenses	938,686	3,045,260
Net Total	\$(157,577)	\$(478,831)

NOTE: During the third quarter of 2015, LBT had additional Ethiopia vehicle purchase costs of \$14,935. These costs are not reflected above.

Empowering Translators

Continued from page 5

to be a parent. In the same way that parents need to share with each other and offer support, it's good for translators to be with other translators, to encourage one another."

Eshinee and translators from three LBT translation projects in Botswana traveled to Zambia for training in October. Eshinee has been a guest lecturer with The Word for the World's translator training in Zambia since 2012 and this year taught Greek to second year students and lexicography (i.e. dictionary-making) to diploma students who were returning for a fourth year of additional training. Motswasele and Keene are in their second year of the diploma program. **LBT**

Gift Designations Your gifts in support of an LBT missionary or project are applied to the budget of that project or missionary. If the budget is overfunded, surplus funds are used to assist other missionaries or similar projects whose budgets are in deficit. Surplus funds are applied where needed most.

CUT HERE

CUT HERE

Birthdays

December

- 5 Isaac Esala*, United States
- 9 Larry Johnson, United States
- 14 Paul Federwitz, Ghana
- 18 Joan Weber, Cameroon
- 24 Josh Wagner, Sierra Leone
- 25 John Davies, Papua New Guinea
- 31 Mical Hilbert, Botswana

- 15 Michael Erslund, Zambia
- 22 David Federwitz, Ghana
- 24 Karen Campbell, International Offices
- 27 Aaron Beckendorf*, Botswana
- 29 Micah Federwitz*, Ghana
- 31 Carsten Hilbert*, Botswana

February

January

- 5 Eliot Esala*, United States
- 6 Karen Tessaro, Nigeria
- 12 Joe Dunsey, International Offices
- 15 Alvina Federwitz, International Offices

- 3 Susan Kaiser, Ethiopia
- 8 JoyAnna Federwitz*, Ghana
- 11 Anna DeLoach*, United States
- 12 Gideon Kuhn*, Cameroon
- 16 Cindy Rodewald, International Offices
- 17 Michael Megahan, Botswana
- 17 Christina LaBoube, Ghana

FOLD

missionary

currents

Prayer partnership is the backbone of this ministry. Here are several prayer concerns for which we ask your support. May God bless you abundantly!

BOTSWANA

- Praise God for the missionary internship service of **Rosemary Selking** this fall. Pray that LBT and Rosemary will receive God's wisdom for future planning.
- Praise God for the printing and distribution of the **Gospel of Luke in Shekgalagari**.

for the five projects currently underway in Botswana.

- Pray for **Rob and Mical Hilbert** as they make final preparations for their new ministry with the Shekgalagari translation project beginning in early 2016.

CAMEROON

- Give thanks for the support of the national **LWML** which provided a grant that enabled purchase of a large volume printer and binder

- Praise God for **Jonathan Burmeister's** final consultant checking of the Kwanja Old Testament lectionary series.

*missionary kid



Lutheran Bible Translators PO Box 789 Concordia, MO 64020

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 80
Aurora, IL 60507

the messenger
Volume 42, Number 4
CHRISTMAS 2015
Dr. Mike Rodewald, Editor
Editorial management by Linda Gari
Printed at Kelmscott Communications, Aurora, IL
The Messenger is the official quarterly periodical of Lutheran Bible Translators, 205 S. Main St, Bldg 5, PO Box 789, Concordia MO 64020. 1-800-532-4253.
Website: www.us.lbt.org **E-mail:** info@LBT.org
Standard A Non-Profit postage paid at Aurora, Illinois. Printed in the U.S.A.
Comments and inquiries are invited. Correspondence may be directed to *The Messenger* Editor.
©2015 Lutheran Bible Translators, Inc. Permission is granted to excerpt from this publication. Please send a copy of your use of material to the editor. Thank you!
This mailing was assembled by volunteers!

A Canadian edition of this newspaper is published by Lutheran Bible Translators of Canada, 137 Queen St. S., Kitchener, ON N2B 1W2.
Lutheran Bible Translators is an independent mission group, founded in 1964, dedicated to making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. It is the only Lutheran organization totally devoted to this specialized ministry. LBT actively recruits Lutherans to serve as Bible translators, literacy or vernacular media specialists and support missionaries. The LBT ministry is supported by the prayers and contributions of fellow Christians. It is not subsidized by any church body or sponsoring agency.
Executive Director:
Dr. Mike Rodewald




Like 'Lutheran Bible Translators' on **Facebook** to see the latest news, links to blog updates and more!

To promote Bible translation, invite your friends to like us, too.

- Praise God for the **Fali language committee** and their enthusiasm to begin a Fali translation project.

ETHIOPIA

- Pray for **Rev. Rich Rudowski** as he travels to Ethiopia to meet with partners to discuss planning for future projects.

GHANA

- Pray that **Paul and Ali Federwitz** adjust well to their new home in Accra.
- Pray for **Rev. Chris LaBoube** and our partners at the **Ghana Institute for Linguistics, Literacy, and Bible Translation Vernacular**

Media Department, making the Word of God accessible to the Ghanaian people in non-print media.

LIBERIA

- Pray for **LIBTRALO** as they continue to serve in God's mission after Alvina Federwitz's departure. Pray for good progress on the construction of the new **LIBTRALO headquarters**.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- Pray for **Janet Borchard** as she studies the Iplii language in order to advise on the full Bible project being done in Papua New Guinea.



SIERRA LEONE

- Praise God for the significant decrease of Ebola cases in Western Africa. Pray for national partners as they rebuild after this state of crisis.

UNITED STATES

- Praise God for the dedication of LBT's new international offices in Concordia, Missouri.
- Pray for God's wisdom and peace for missionary applicants as the board considers their missionary appointment in January 2016.

- Pray for **Rev. Ken Bunge, Salim Attisha**, and our partners at **Aramaic Bible Translators** as they continue work on the Chaldean Bible for Chaldean speakers in the U.S and Iraq.

ZAMBIA

- Pray for our partners and the **Bible Society of Zambia** including **Evarito Mambwe**, General Secretary; **Rev. Gift Nyirenda**, Translations Manager, and **Juliet Chansa**, Finance officer.

