

LBT the messenger

lutheran bible translators
GOD'S WORD
for every language

Adventures in Salone

[Amy Formella, with Jim Laesch]

I WAS PRIVILEGED to travel to Sierra Leone as part of my preparation to serve as a Bible translation advisor to the Mende project. Nicknamed Salone, Sierra Leone is a beautiful country with mountains, palm trees, vibrantly green grass, and serene beaches. I was told that if you simply drop a seed in the ground it will grow with no extra attention. I believe it's true!

Traveling with me was Jim Laesch, LBT's Associate Director of International Program Ministries. We first stopped in Liberia, Sierra Leone's neighbor to the south. (Jim and his family lived there long ago, serving with the Grebo New Testament translation team.) I spent a week job-shadowing fellow missionary Becky Grossmann. A generation ago, Becky was just like me: recent Concordia grad, trained in linguistics, single, and beginning a career as a Bible translation advisor!

Becky helped the Bandi people have the very first Scripture in their language. Now she is a Bible translation consultant working with three different translation teams in Liberia. It's not all Hebrew and Greek either. Becky helps with computer issues, Bible software questions and training, internet connectivity and more. I saw all of the above in action while she and the Mann translators checked portions of Genesis and 1st Samuel. It was amazing! I learned about many of these translation challenges in class, but seeing them in action solidified what I had been taught: Bible translation is not simple and requires that God be the leader of the project.

From Liberia, Jim and I flew to Sierra Leone. Lungi International Airport is fairly close to Freetown, the capital city, if you travel by sea. To get to Freetown you either have to take a long drive or a 25-minute boat ride.



During rainy season, dirt roads are hard to drive on.

Driving can take three hours or longer, especially during rainy season. Over 100 inches of rain may fall, making the dirt roads difficult to navigate. Jim and I, along with fellow missionary Josh Wagner, did the driving route since the Wagners live and

work in Makeni, north of Freetown. (I got the chance to use the boat two weeks later when Jim and I headed back to the airport to return to the U.S.—fun!).

In Freetown I was introduced to leaders of the Bible Society in Sierra Leone (BSSL) and leaders of The Institute for Sierra Leonean Languages (TISLL), two of LBT's long-time partners. Then it was on to Bo, the second largest city in Sierra Leone and my future home.

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A Name Above All

[Eshinee Veith, linguist exegete, Botswana]

I DON'T collect many things. Except for my brief stamp-collecting phase in grade school, I don't typically accumulate groups of similar items unless I have a specific use for them. That all changed when Coke cans with Setswana (Se-tswana: language of the Tswana people) names started appearing in the grocery stores here in Botswana (Bo-tswana: land of the Tswana people).

One of the highlights in my Setswana learning process was the discovery that Setswana names are actually words or phrases in Setswana. Whenever I meet a Motswana (Mo-tswana: a Tswana person) whose name I can figure out, I usually translate into English on the spot. Out loud. In front of them. This serves two purposes. First of all, it helps me to anchor their name in my memory for future reference by connecting the sounds in their name to meaning in my own mother tongue (English). Secondly, it often surprises them as they can't anticipate just by looking at me that I know Setswana.

Learning that each Setswana name carried meaning was a switch for me, having grown up in North America where people's names are usually purely that—a name or label for a person that distinguishes them from other people. More often than not, North American names are given for reasons other than their meaning as words. But even when the meaning of a name is considered, those name-words are usually borrowed from a language other than English. This means that English-speakers using those names won't know what they mean unless they are told.

Not so in Setswana culture. When a Motswana child is named, it is usually a statement about either the child or the circumstances surrounding their birth. Many people have names that show the parents' positive feelings about the child. Others express thanks for the birth: *Kelebogile* (I-have-thanked), *Omphile* (You-have-given-me). Sometimes, there are significant or difficult things happening in the family, causing a child to be given a name that reflects this: *Boipuso* (Independence), *Dikeledi*



Thapelo = Prayer
Mpho = Gift
Pako = Praise

Lesege = Blessing
Kasigo = Peace
Masego = Blessings

(Tears), *Kenosi* (I am-alone). Children can also be named for the attributes that their parents hope they will have: *Onalethuso* (You-have-help), *Bontle* (Beauty).

We know from elsewhere in the Bible that Hebrew names were sometimes given for the same reasons that Setswana names are given. Perhaps this is why the angel of the Lord was so specific with Joseph about what the name of the baby would be when he was explaining the nature of Mary's pregnancy to him in a dream. If Jesus had been born in Botswana, I can imagine what his father might have been tempted to name him, given both the political climate of the day and the

circumstances of his birth. Perhaps he would have been called *Pogiso* (Suffering), *Motsalwapele* (Firstborn), or even *Otswakae* (Where-does-he-come-from).

Instead, Joseph was instructed to give Mary's son the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (Ἰησοῦς in Greek, Jesus in English). The angel even goes so far as to explain why this is the name that should be given.

Joseph could have given his son a name that would have been a constant reminder of any one of the troubling circumstances of the child's birth. Instead, the simple act of calling *Yeshua* for dinner would become a confession of faith in the nature of God and of hope for who Mary's son would become.

We celebrate the birth of God's Son in a world where his name has lost its meaning for so many. May we hold fast to our confession of this hope: beyond all fear... beyond all suffering...beyond all circumstances... God saves. **LBT**

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him **Yeshua**. [which means 'Adonai saves,'] because he will **save his people** from their sins."

Matthew 1:21
Complete Jewish Bible

The Veiths live in Maun, Botswana. Eshinee serves as linguist exegete while husband Rob is LBT's Vernacular Media Specialist/Ethnomusicologist. Learn more about their ministry at us.lbt.org/project/Eshinee-rob-veith/.

A Dream Come True

[Ruthie Wagner, translation advisor/Sierra Leone]

WHAT do you call “thumbs” and “toes” in the Themne language? How about “hail”? The color “purple”? What do you call a “shekel,” a “talent,” the “outer court” of the temple? How about a “pomegranate”? How do you spell Asher, Jeroboam, Adoni-bezek? How do you account for the various ways to say the same thing in the different dialects of Themne?

The questions are endless when translating the Bible! Being a Bible translation advisor has been my dream job for over 10 years, and now I’m living it, serving with the Themne Old Testament translation team in Sierra Leone, West Africa. It’s more challenging than I expected, but also more rewarding. I never anticipated the struggles beyond translation, which in itself is mountainous. The planning, evaluating, reporting, finances, communication, software challenges seem endless. I don’t love this part of the process, but it’s what makes the good stuff happen.

The Bible Society of Sierra Leone (BSSL) is our main partner here, a Sierra Leonean run institution that oversees translation work and embraces the vision of God’s Word reaching those in the furthest villages. While our LBT supervisor was here in early summer, I presented a report to him and BSSL that outlined the status of the project, the quality challenges, the setbacks and the victories.

The unfortunate takeaway of the report was that this Themne Old Testament translation is going to take longer than nearly everyone initially expected if the result is going to be of good quality.

The good news is that the leadership of the Bible Society quickly embraced the challenge, facing the issues and clearing a way forward. The translators are ready to do the job and to do it well... even though it means a lot of hard work, and a lot more training. In one of the several meetings I had with the translation team and administrators, one of the translators clearly expressed their commitment to the project: *it’s the Word of God, it’s their language, it’s an opportunity to make their personal contributions.*

Tremendous. Motivating. Inspiring!

I love my job and my colleagues. I don’t love writing reports, but it helps keep us focused and moves us forward. Now we can discuss the issues and come to good conclusions.



Ruthie with translation team members Professor Joseph Kamara and Pastor Daniel Fullah, enjoying the work and challenges.

Interestingly, thumbs and toes are the same in Themne—“big fingers” on hands or feet. Hail is “falling stars”. Purple doesn’t exist in the vocabulary and must be discussed further. Themne always measures volume, not weight. Outer courts and pomegranates are totally unknown and need visuals to be understood. The translators love that the spellings of proper nouns in Themne are much closer to Hebrew than English—the vowel pronunciations and the absent “J” sound are similar. As for dialects, all the major ones are represented by the team members (two of them linguists and teachers of Themne). It is a blessing to have a team that can manage these issues so that the Themne people will see and understand the Bible as their own.

My colleagues are capable, brilliant, and committed. They love the Word of God. It’s an honor to come alongside them, to learn from them, to advise them, and to train them in their work. **LBT**

Ruthie, with her husband Josh and three sons, lives in Makeni, Sierra Leone. While Ruthie serves as a translation advisor, Josh serves as Scripture engagement advisor. Learn more about their ministry at us.lbt.org/project/josh-ruthie-wagner/.

Son of David

[Linda Gari and Michael Ersland]

LBT missionary Michael Ersland was amazed. “It’s a portion of Scripture I grew up thinking was boring. I had heard that many cultures prize genealogies, but to witness this firsthand, especially with the first chapter of Matthew, was inspiring.”

Michael serves in Ghana as the translation advisor to the Komba Old Testament translation. He spent several months living with a host family in a Komba village, observing Komba life and learning about the culture.

In the evening, after dinner, Komba women have ‘down time’ or ‘family time’. They may shuck corn, make a phone call, or practice their reading skills by working through a portion of the Komba New Testament. They also might listen to praise songs or Scripture, using a Proclaimer, a digital player preloaded with Scripture.

“A passage I heard played over and over again on several occasions was Matthew Chapter 1,” said Michael. “My host mother would play a few verses and repeat Christ’s genealogy out loud. She would then go back and repeat sections of the genealogy again. It was as if she was working on memorizing it.”

He couldn’t help but be astonished as he saw how meaningful this was to her.

Genealogies have always played an important role in oral societies. They help establish social status, acknowledge marriage contracts, and help maintain ethnic identity. They tell a person’s history, and where they came from.

For the Komba, hearing Christ’s genealogy creates a connection on a cultural level. It identifies Jesus through His ancestors and establishes His lineage. It affirms His existence as a real, living person.

As Michael observed the impact the genealogy had on his host mother, he began to consider what impact it had on *him*.

“The genealogy relates God to humans. It shows God working through the lives of people throughout the centuries,” said Michael. “It shows us His interaction went to the extent of God becoming man and dwelling among us by clearly naming Jesus the ‘son of David’, a Messianic title.”

This small portion of Scripture held significance for those who first heard it almost 2,000 years ago and continues to succinctly tell us who and what Jesus is. It can speak to new believers as well as those whose well-worn Bibles have seen much use.

Continued on page 7

Adventures in Salone

Continued from page 1

I was introduced to more leaders of the Bible Society and the Mende translation team: Kamanda George, Mr. Vandi, Pa Tucker, and the keyboarder, Eunice Samba.

The Mende account for almost one third the total population of Sierra Leone, living mostly in the southern and eastern provinces. They are an agricultural society, mainly practicing Islam, with Christians in the minority. Traditional beliefs and practices are still very influential.

Much of our time in and out of the office was dedicated to technology: fixing and updating computers, adding programs, and training on the Bible translation program called Paratext. Prior to our arrival, only one translator was using Paratext. By the time we left, Eunice was using the program, the head translator had learned more about Paratext’s capabilities, and the other translators were learning more about using a computer.

I was also able to attend a local Lutheran church and meet several Sierra Leonean Lutheran pastors.

And I stayed at the house where I will be living as of (God willing) Spring 2017.

The Mende team wanted me to stay and work with them right away. I am so looking forward

to beginning this ministry to which God has led me. I firmly believe that the Scriptures will change lives among the Mende people. Will you be a partner with me? **LBT**



Pa Tucker, Amy, Eunice Samba,
Kamanda George, Mr. Vandi

To support Amy, visit us.lbt.org/project/amy-formella/. Amy is currently building a support base of prayer and financial partners. She will be in the Wisconsin/Midwest area through the end of 2016 and the Phoenix area during January 2017. If you would like her to speak at your church, LWML, or Bible study group, contact her at amy.formella@lbt.org.

Through the Camera's Lens

[Emily Wilson]

GOD answers our prayers—sometimes in more extraordinary ways than we could ever imagine.

For six months during her senior year of college at the University of Central Missouri, Michelle Griffith prayed for God to guide her steps to serve as a photographer for a non-profit organization.

In March, Michelle's professor, Mr. Robert Breshears, shared an amazing opportunity with her. Lutheran Bible Translators was seeking an intern for the summer to take photos and videos domestically and internationally. The goal was to capture the excitement of LBT-U (a week-long conference with LBT missionaries and staff), the dedication of the Nsenga New Testament in Zambia, and the Shekgalagari Bible translation project in Botswana.

Michelle's prayer for a non-profit organization job opportunity was answered. Six months prior, she would have never imagined that her passion for sharing the Gospel, photography, international work, and serving in the non-profit sector could all be combined into one extraordinary experience.



Michelle was excited to witness the Nsenga people receive God's Word.

“The Gospels share how **Jesus cared for people** who were overlooked by society. I believe Lutheran Bible Translators is looking at people **through Jesus' eyes** as they work alongside people in minority language groups to make Scripture **accessible** in their heart **language.**”

through Lutheran Bible Translators both overseas and in the international offices in Concordia,” said Michelle.

“I was so excited to participate in God's mission to bring His life-changing Word to His beloved people in a way they can finally know Him. I have witnessed my Nsenga brothers and sisters talk to our Father for the very first time, and I can't think of anything more valuable for the lens of my camera to capture.”

Michelle's internship experience was so much more than an addition to her portfolio and resume. Although the professional takeaways were numerous, she most valued her growth in cultural understanding and witnessing God's work among His people across the nations.

“The Gospels share how Jesus cared for people who were overlooked by society. I believe Lutheran Bible Translators is looking at people through Jesus' eyes as they work alongside people in minority language groups to make Scripture accessible in their heart language.”

God uses our unique gifts to serve in His mission. How is God using you and your vocation? Lutheran Bible Translators is working to develop future internships to join together vocational and missional calling for college students and graduates. It is our hope that by offering internship opportunities for a variety of fields and occupations, we will successfully engage more people of the next generation in both professional and spiritual growth.

As you contemplate how God is using you in His mission with Lutheran Bible Translators, take Michelle's advice:

“Pray. If LBT is the door that God opens in His perfect timing, let it be an honor and joy for you to take part in sharing His redeeming Gospel with those who do not have access to it in their own heart language...yet.” **LBT**

If you are interested in finding out more about the internship opportunities available through Lutheran Bible Translators, email Tim Bain at recruiter@lbt.org.

A Taste of Facebook

CHECK out LBT on Facebook! There are lots of things going on, more than we can write about in *The Messenger*. Here's a sampling of a few recent events.



Just in time publication is one of LBT's strategies to accelerate access to God's Word in a people group's heart language. As soon as a translated text is consultant approved for publication, it is

released to the community. Here, LBT missionary Rob Hilbert presents the master audio copy of Luke in Shekgalagari (Botswana) to Bible Society of Botswana General Secretary Rev. Gabriel Tsuaneng. LBT Director of International Programs Rev. Rich Rudowske...

[\(read more on Facebook\)](#)



Michael Erslund spent a week taking a culture course at the Tamale Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies in Ghana. Here's a little bit of what he learned NOT TO DO in northern Ghana:

1. Folding your hands on your head to relax. This means death has occurred, so you fold hands on your head when you are mourning.
2. Shaking hands with the left hand. The left is considered the weaker hand and it is...

[\(read more on Facebook\)](#)



LBT's partner in Nigeria, The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, recently celebrated their 80th anniversary! Pray for continued blessings upon our Nigerian brothers and sisters in Christ. 

YOUR PARTICIPATION NEEDED:

Become a Voting Member!

It's not too late to become a voting member of LBT.

To vote in 2017 you will need to do two things. First, you need to financially support Bible translation through LBT's Every Language Fund or one or more of your favorite LBT ministries or missionaries yet this year. *All donations must be postmarked no later than 12/31/16.*

Then, when you receive your 2016 year-end tax document early in 2017, you'll need to fill out and return the included form. You will be asked to verify that you are currently a member of a Lutheran church and that you are at least 18 years old. Married couples who give through LBT as a couple are both eligible to register separately as members for voting purposes.

Voting members may nominate people to the board of directors, vote for the board, and serve on the board. Members are invited to attend the annual LBT event and business meeting.

Help LBT stay true to its mission by becoming a 2017 voting member.

For more information contact Barbara Beermann at barbara.beermann@lbt.org or **660-225-0811**.

IMPORTANT BYLAWS CHANGE

As a result of bylaws amendments, LBT voting membership is now based on the following criteria:

- A financial contribution to LBT given during the previous calendar year;
- Membership in a Lutheran congregation;
- Age 18 years or older.

These requirements shall be validated by returning the membership form that you will receive with your year-end donor receipt.

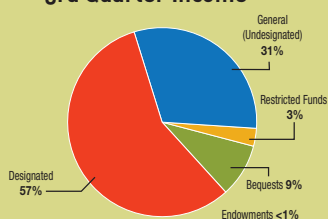
Voting members of LBT receive notice of the annual business meeting of LBT, are eligible to nominate candidates for the board of directors, vote for members of the board during elections, and participate in bylaws changes that define the organization.

LBT PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

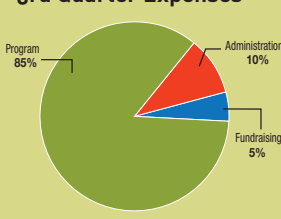
July 1—September 30, 2016

	Unaudited 3rd Quarter	Unaudited Year-to-date
INCOME		
Designated	\$ 484,687	\$ 1,401,079
General (Undesignated)	261,145	829,439
Restricted Funds	29,005	83,724
Bequests	77,180	588,078
Endowments	305	(4,923)
Total Income	\$ 852,322	\$ 2,897,397

3rd Quarter Income



3rd Quarter Expenses



EXPENSES

	3rd Quarter	Year-to-date
Program	\$ 789,672	\$ 2,192,958
Administration	86,334	324,513
Fundraising	50,149	140,163
Total Expenses	926,155	2,657,634
Net Total	\$ (73,833)	\$ 239,763

NOTE: During the third quarter of 2016, LBT purchased one computer for the International Offices at a cost of \$1,158. This cost is not reflected above.

Son of David

Continued from page 4

As for Michael, he'll never find the first chapter of Matthew boring again. "God understands where we are coming from. He knows our sins on a more intimate level than we can comprehend. He has interacted with us throughout history, promising a Savior to redeem us from sin. Matthew lets us know very clearly that our Messiah has come!" **LBT**

To learn more about Michael and the Komba Old Testament translation, visit us.lbt.org/project/michael-ersland/.

Gift Designations

Your gifts in support of an LBT missionary are first applied to the budget of that missionary. If a missionary budget is overfunded, 80% of surplus is rolled over for use by that missionary in the following budget year while 20% is applied where needed most with priority towards the support of missionaries whose budgets are in deficit.

Gifts in support of a project are applied to the budgeted expenses of that project. If a project budget is overfunded, surplus funds are used to assist similar projects whose budgets are not fully funded.

CUT HERE

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Birthdays

December

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Melissa Schweigert, International Offices | 15 Michael Erslund, Ghana |
| 5 Isaac Esala*, United States | 22 David Federwitz, Ghana |
| 9 Larry Johnson, United States | 24 Karen Campbell, International Offices |
| 14 Paul Federwitz, Ghana | 27 Aaron Beckendorf*, Botswana |
| 18 Joan Weber, Cameroon | 29 Micah Federwitz*, Ghana |
| 24 Josh Wagner, Sierra Leone | 31 Barbara Beermann, International Offices |
| 25 John Davies, Papua New Guinea | 31 Carsten Hilbert*, Botswana |
| 28 Kathy Knipmeyer, International Offices | |
| 31 Mical Hilbert, Botswana | |

January

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 5 Eliot Esala*, United States | 3 Susan Kaiser, Ethiopia |
| 6 Karen Tessaro, Nigeria | 8 JoyAnna Federwitz*, Ghana |
| 12 Joe Dunsey, International Offices | 11 Anna DeLoach*, Papua New Guinea |
| 15 Alvina Federwitz, United States | 12 Gideon Kuhn*, Cameroon |
| | 16 Cindy Rodewald, United States |
| | 17 Michael Megahan, Botswana |
- *missionary kid

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 successful audio recording of the Gospel of Luke in the **Shekgalagari** language.
- Pray for the **Kalanga Bible translation team** as they work together to complete the whole Bible translation.
- Pray for the new **Kuhane Bible translation project** as the team works on translating the Gospel of John.

CAMEROON

- Thank God for providing national workers for the **Nizaa New Testament translation project**. Pray that He will bless, guide, and unify them as they work together with **Rev. Mike and Kara Kuhn**.
- Pray for **Mackenzie Kure** as she continues to serve as a nanny for the Kuhn children.



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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



ETHIOPIA

- Pray for the **Zayse, Dirayta, Konso, Ale, and Tsamakko teams** as they translate God's Word into their languages.

GHANA

- Pray for **Michael Erslund** as he continues to learn the Komba language and culture.
- Pray for **Rev. David and Valerie Federwitz** as they determine how best to handle the education needs of their children.

- Pray for **Paul Federwitz** as he supports the mission of Bible translation in information technology and for **Ali Federwitz** as she works with the Mobile Member Care Team in West Africa.

LIBERIA

- Praise God that the workshop dates have all been set for 2017 in Liberia with **Becky Grossmann**.
- Pray for continued local support and safety for all of the translation teams.



NIGERIA

- Praise God for LBT's international associates, **Rev. Kierien Ekpang Ayugha** and **Rev. Linus Otronyi**.

SIERRA LEONE

- Pray for the **Themne translation team** and various church and community leaders as they work together to encourage use and understanding of God's Word in their heart language.

UNITED STATES

- Pray for blessings of wisdom and guidance for new missionaries **Elliot and Serena Derricks** and **Rev. Carl and Kelsey Grulke** as they continue their studies at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in preparation for their field work.
- Pray for the **Derricks** as they welcome their new baby in January 2017.

