

# WordsforLife

Winter 2011



Front cover: A young boy holding the Kinaray-a New Testament for the first time.

Below: Mekana Yesus church in a rural area outside of Kibre Mengist, a city in southwestern Ethiopia. This area is home to the Guji Oromo people.



“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” – John 10:10

Welcome to the winter edition of Words for Life from Wycliffe Bible Translators. I hope that the news we have to share in this edition will fill you with joy and excitement.

It seems that we are all too aware of the tough economic climate, the social challenges we face across the UK coinciding with the increasing decline in church attendance and public acknowledgement of God. The fight is on our doorstep and, to be perfectly honest, it can look as though God has forgotten us.

But, that's not the case. Being part of God's family means being part of a worldwide church where thousands are coming to faith every day. Yes, it's tough here at home, but in many of the communities where Wycliffe is working lives are being changed and many people are coming to know God as their saviour.

In this magazine we can only share a glimpse of what is happening, but we hope that this small insight will stir your heart to praise God, for who he is and what he is doing.



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Eddie Arthur

# Ordinary made extraordinary

I am basically an ordinary sort of bloke – middle-aged, bald, slightly tubby, increasingly prone to aches and pains. You wouldn't think twice if you saw me in the street. You probably wouldn't even notice me. I'm just a face in the crowd.

But you know what? I am really special, a truly extraordinary person.

Let me tell you about it.

God loves me, he has forgiven me and he has drawn me into his family. God's Spirit lives in me and I am a joint heir with Jesus Christ. One day this lad from a council house in Sunderland will rule over a new heaven and a new earth with Jesus Christ.

This sounds ridiculous, but I'm certain it's true because the Bible tells me that it is. But the Bible doesn't just tell me about my amazing destiny; it is God's power, through the message of the Bible, that turned my life around in the first place. Without the Bible, I'd just be ordinary.

The Bible is an extraordinary book. It tells the story of how God can change people's lives from death to life, from dark to light. But it doesn't just stop there: as people read the Bible they are drawn into the story and find their lives being completely transformed. They find themselves heading for an altogether different destiny, just like I did.



Harvesting grain in Cambodia looks glamorous. With an arm full of golden grain and a face full of sunshine this farmer makes the harvest look like light work. Cambodia has been through some hard times – war, genocide, starvation and the list continues. But we can give thanks that in this country Christians have been able to worship openly since 1990 and the church is growing.

*Photo: Ari Vitikainen*

And this is why we want to translate the Bible. We don't just want people to have access to an amazing work of literature, one of the great cultural artifacts of all time. It's not simply so that people can read a fascinating story. No, we want people to experience the transforming power of God's word for themselves. We want them to hear what God is saying to them and for them to know God at work in their lives and in their own context.



Having a Bible and being able to read it is an awesome privilege. It's a great read, with all sorts of fascinating twists and turns and sub-plots. But the most wonderful thing about the Bible is that God, by his Spirit, uses the Bible to mould our lives, to shape us into the people he wants us to be. He has taken this lad from Sunderland and over time is transforming me into someone who will be fit to rule the world with him. And he is doing the same for people all across the globe.

But there are still millions of people around the world for whom the Bible is a closed book because they simply can't read it in a language they understand. It is our responsibility – part of the shaping and moulding that God carries out in our lives – to help bring the Bible to them. There is one thing that is an even greater privilege than having God at work in our lives through his word, and that is being a part of making that transforming word available to others.

**biblefresh**

It could change your world



2011 has been a special year as we've celebrated the 400th anniversary of the King James/ Authorised Version. As part of this celebratory year we've been part of a partnership called Biblefresh, working with different denominations, Bible colleges, organisations and charities to promote Bible reading in the UK.

It has been our hope throughout Biblefresh, as people in the UK grew to love their own Bible, they would want to make sure that other people would have good access to the Bible in their own language. People like Jacob...

Jacob Tarnagda sits on a pew in the Assemblies of God church in Garango, Burkina Faso

Photo: Clare Kendall

## Jacob's Story

When Jacob Tarnagda (45) became a Christian, his Muslim family rejected him, leaving him virtually destitute and without the backing for the education he had dreamed of.

Twenty years on, he's still waiting to read the Bible in his own language, a prospect that's coming closer thanks to your support for a scheme to translate the New Testament into the Bissa Barka language.

'My family reacted very badly,' he recalls. 'They thought that because I was a Christian I was impure, so they wouldn't eat with me. They thought that my faith was like a wound and it would infect them through the food, so that they would become dirty.'

'They wouldn't even look at me. I used to stay outside the house until it got dark and only go in when everyone was asleep. From time to time my mother would leave food out for me. But I was hungry for three years.'

'It's been worth it, because what I have is bigger than what I would have had if I'd stayed with them, refused the faith and remained lost.'

Jacob, who attends a Baptist church, wants to tell others about his faith, but struggles to do so without a Bible.

'I started reading a French Bible and later a Moore one,' he says. 'I went to Moore literacy classes so that I could use it.'

'I can understand bits when I read; the problem is when I have to talk to people about the Lord, without the Bible in my mother tongue I haven't got the right words to talk to them.'

## Wycliffe and Biblefresh

The aims of Biblefresh are:

### Bible Reading

Wycliffe worked with Scripture Union and the Bible Society on the Essential 100 Bible Reading Challenge, encouraging individuals, small groups and churches to work through 100 essential Scripture passages – [e100challenge.org.uk](http://e100challenge.org.uk)



## Bible Training

We've been helping churches local to the Wycliffe Centre get more out of their Bibles through a series of evening classes. These talks are all available online, either through iTunes or our website – [wycliffe.org.uk/eveningclasses](http://wycliffe.org.uk/eveningclasses)

## Bible Experience

We even went on tour with Saltmine Theatre Company to show From Eden to Eternity, the story of the Bible in about an hour.

## Bible Translation

We also hoped that as Christians in this country grew to love their Bible more that they would want to give in support of Bible translation projects. Biblefresh has focussed on two projects in the Bissa region of Burkina Faso, West Africa.

The outcomes and lasting impact of Biblefresh won't be known for some time. However, we can continue to pray for...

- Churches and Christians in the UK – that they would love God and want to know him more.
- The seeds that have been sown through Biblefresh to blossom – and that people would make the most of having such easy access to God's word.
- A continued growing awareness of the need for Bible translation.

If you would like to give in support of the Biblefresh translation projects you can do so easily online at [biblefresh.com/give](http://biblefresh.com/give)

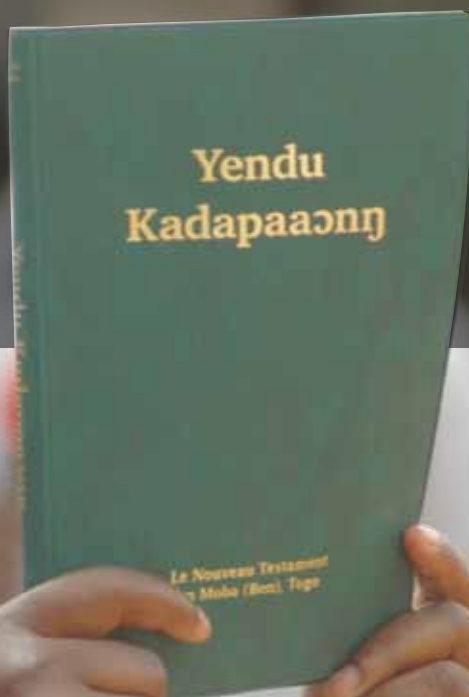
Hope for the next generation:  
A woman clutches the Bissa Lebir  
New Testament translation to her chest.

*Photo: Clare Kendall*

# Leave a lasting legacy

Leaving a gift to Wycliffe Bible Translators in your will can have an impact for years to come.

Very often people cannot afford to give as much as they would like towards Bible translation. Leaving a gift in a will, when all the expenses have been taken care of, can make it possible to give a significant gift and ensure the long term future of Bible translation.



It is very straightforward to arrange for a legacy to be given to Wycliffe Bible Translators and your solicitor should be able to help you do this quite quickly.

For more information on legacy giving visit [wycliffe.org.uk/legacy](http://wycliffe.org.uk/legacy) or contact your solicitor directly.



Listening to Audio Scripture on the MegaVoice

# Revival Among the Pinai-



Markus Melliger with translators  
Matyu Aina (centre) and Andrew Mei

## Reaching the lost sheep

Ever since we started our work among the Pinai-Hagahai, a very isolated language group that is only about 1,000 people strong, friends would ask us, “Why would you want to spend all these years and all this effort on a language group that is so small? Isn’t that a waste?” One of the answers that we have always given is: “If the Good Shepherd goes after the one lost sheep and leaves the 99, then that doesn’t make much sense humanly speaking. But from the perspective of God’s heart it makes perfect sense.” In many respects, the Pinai-Hagahai are like the one lost sheep.

In 1993, when we started our language work among the Pinai-Hagahai, English was not known in the language group and knowledge of the trade language Tok Pisin was very limited.



# Hagahai

by Markus Melliger

We had to invest considerable time and effort in learning the language. None of our first four language helpers, with whom we worked exclusively for the first six years, had ever gone to school.

We had, however, the privilege of working with Christians. Even before we arrived in the area, the first evangelists from one of the neighbouring language groups had started small churches in various villages.

Out of necessity, these evangelists always used their own language, Enga, or Tok Pisin when they preached. Unless someone interpreted these sermons, the majority of the Pinai-Hagahai people could not understand them. But over time, some people did become Christians, and although their number was small and their knowledge of the Bible limited, they were believers nonetheless.

We were happy to be able to work with brothers in Christ and hoped, by means of Bible translation work, to be able to make a contribution to the growth of their faith.

Because the Pinai-Hagahai live in such a remote area, there was a serious problem of lawlessness and crime when we started our work. Within months of our arrival in the language group, our village house was looted and destroyed, people were robbed, beaten, raped, and wounded, and the whole village was abandoned and burned down. The criminal activity in those days was so

Markus Melliger and William Mek working on translation

severe that I sometimes thought, “This is indeed a God-forsaken place.”

But God had neither forgotten nor abandoned his lost sheep.

### Speaking with a “MegaVoice”

15 years later, in May 2008, the dedication of the four Gospels and Acts in the Pinai-Hagahai language took place. We distributed 150 copies of the printed version of this Bible portion. But, because we knew of the very high illiteracy rate among the people, we also made use of a new technology: a small, portable, solar-powered player called “MegaVoice”.

Because, up to that point, I was the most fluent reader in the Pinai-Hagahai language, our language committee decided that I should read the whole text of the four Gospels and Acts. This job, including the editing process on my computer, kept me occupied full-time for three months.

But it was worth it. When we had our dedication of the four Gospels and Acts we were able to distribute 150 printed copies and also a trial run of 70 MegaVoice players which contained exactly the same text in oral form.

Over the following two years, because we had heard some initial positive feedback about the use of the players, we sent an additional 230 players out to the villages. We felt the investment was worth it.

### Message received and understood

July 2011 was the time for us to find out if and how these players had been used. I flew to one village while my wife Liisa, together with a literacy worker and one of our co-translators, flew to another. We asked the people if and how they have used the players and if the Gospel message has had any impact at all in their lives.

To us, the testimonies the people gave are truly amazing and nothing short of a miracle. These are just a few of the many collected during this trip:

**Toli**, a middle-aged man and one of the elders: “When a few years ago I got a printed copy of the Gospel of Mark, I cried because I don’t know how to read. I prayed. I got a MegaVoice one and a half years ago. Now the message is clear. I listen to it daily. Now I’m like a man who knows how to read. Now I’m like a pastor.”

**Kandama**, an old man: “The talk is clear now. I heard that we should not slander or judge others. I saw my guilt. I stopped doing that. I also wanted to remove the splinter from the eyes of others but I myself had a log in my eyes. I saw my guilt. I stopped doing that.”

**Mogome**, a middle-aged woman: “I heard the story of Zacchaeus, the short man who climbed up on a tree to see Jesus. That story spoke to my heart. He was not a good man, and I’m not a good woman. I want to change a few things in my life. I need to pray.”

**Kodap**, a young married man and bilingual speaker of Pinai-Hagahai and Enga: “I didn’t go to church. I never had a MegaVoice player. I listened to the one of others. I listened to it, and last month I got converted. I gave up gambling, smoking, and chewing betel-nuts. I remember that Jesus is the Word of God.”



Listening to the MegaVoice



Liisa Melliger working on literacy materials



## Following the Good Shepherd

One thing that is very interesting to note is that during this revival the Gospel does not seem to remain with “just” the one small language group of the Pinai-Hagahai. Suddenly, the Gospel seems to “spill over” into other language groups as well. Somehow I had always worked under the assumption that our translation work would be just for the Pinai-Hagahai. Now I’m beginning to realise that God seems to have something bigger in mind of which I had no clue until a few days ago. The borders have been suddenly pushed outward. The Gospel first spoke to the Pinai-Hagahai speakers, but now it increasingly speaks to the bilingual people in the border villages. In one case it even went to a village in the middle of a different language group altogether. So perhaps, when the Good Shepherd goes after the one lost sheep, he always has in mind the salvation of other lost sheep as well.

In conclusion, I would like to point out a few things that I feel are important for all of us. One is that the work of Bible translation is necessary and worth it. Without a translation into the heart language of the people, a lot of people feel excluded from the Gospel. Some don’t believe, not

because they “don’t want” to believe, but simply because they have nothing to believe in. But with a translation, people can understand and believe the word. From the above testimonies we can see that some people became believers once they had heard the Gospel in their own language, a language they could understand clearly.

The other thing I would like to point out is that it’s not enough that a translation is simply, “clear, natural, and accurate”. It must also be “accessible”. In our case, to keep our translation only in book form would clearly not have been enough. To make our translation “accessible” by means of audio recordings is essential.

And last but not least: Revival is and remains a mystery of God. Why revival sometimes starts even when we do everything “wrong” or why it sometimes does not start even when we do everything “right,” we can’t explain. Or why it sometimes hasn’t started “yet” and why we sometimes have to sow for years without reaping anything – and then others arrive and start reaping right away! – we don’t know. Ultimately, we’re here to follow the Good Shepherd and be faithful servants and trust him, even when the going is tough.

# Discovery Exhibition at your church or event



**Wycliffe Bible Translators' Discovery Exhibition introduces you to the huge variety of languages and people groups on the earth today. Among the 6,900 languages worldwide, over 300 million people still do not have a single verse of Scripture, and many more only have small portions.**

We would love to share this resource with you at your church or event. It is possible to transport it to your location and back to our UK office by courier which incurs some cost, and donations would be welcome.

We pray that as you share what God is doing amongst the nations of the world, you will be inspired and excited again about the Bible in your own language, and will want to share it with those who don't yet have it themselves.

To enquire about using this display, or how Wycliffe could support your event with literature, display material or a speaker, please contact us on 01494 682 339 or email [communications\\_uk@wycliffe.org](mailto:communications_uk@wycliffe.org)



# David and Evelyn Baines

Ad Masters



**David and Evelyn Baines are Wycliffe Bible Translators members, supporting translation and literacy work around the world from their base in Edinburgh. We caught up with them to hear about their work and experiences.**

## **You live in Edinburgh...how can you be involved in Bible translation?**

**David** – I work on a team that creates software for Wycliffe's work. I test the software and provide support to the linguists and translators who use it. Testing reduces the number of problems that occur, and when they do, I help to resolve them quickly and remotely. This is in comparison to the long journey that could be necessary for workers in remote areas. In Chad, for example, journeys to the capital from the villages aren't possible during the rainy season except by air: help could be weeks away.

**Evelyn** – I translate articles that promote Wycliffe's work, various documents and training materials into French so our colleagues in French-speaking countries can be better equipped to work in literacy and Bible translation.

## **Have you come across many challenges in the last ten years?**

**David** – To live in a different culture, away from family and friends, is stretching as well as rewarding. We have encountered illness, grief and repeated moves. Most surprising and challenging was the experience of political instability. While we were in the Philippines, there was a coup not long before we left. The office closed early as the streets were filled with people and the journey





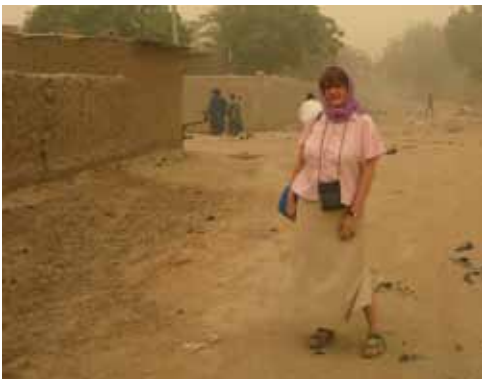
home from the office took 4 hours. We lived under curfew for several days.

In Chad, we remember waking to the sound of bombing and having to evacuate our home during an attempted coup. We saw military helicopters and jets overhead and could hear the screams of people in the streets. Many people lost their lives; others lost their homes and livelihoods. We left Chad soon after. It was months before life felt normal again.

**With those difficulties, what keeps you going at your work?**

**Evelyn** – We have committed to use our skills so that many will come to know God through his word in their own language. It is humbling and motivating to see people so keen to have God’s word that they travel for days and pay a week’s wage to have their own copy of the New Testament.

Our work has direct impact: a lot of the expertise of Bible translation and literacy is still only available in English. I personally know



If you would like to know more about David and Evelyn and their work you can find out more at [wycliffe.org.uk/debaines](http://wycliffe.org.uk/debaines).



French-speaking colleagues who will benefit from my translation work.

**David** – The software I work on is already being used to study around 180 minority languages, representing 59 million speakers. Wycliffe aims to see lives transformed by the power of God’s word in heart languages and I am involved in providing efficient tools so that the vision is realised.

**What would you like people to pray for you?**

**David** – After 11 years of short-term accommodation, we feel the need for a settled home in the UK and would appreciate prayer for all of the related decisions. We value prayer for our roles as we work remotely in Edinburgh. We are encouraged that people pray for us and support us, but we need to see an increase in our prayer and financial support to cover our living and work expenses.

David and Evelyn do not receive a salary; their work for the translation of God’s word relies on the support of churches and individuals.

**If you want to support Bible translation through David and Evelyn, you can do this through the Wycliffe website ([wycliffe.org.uk/memberfundraisingdd](http://wycliffe.org.uk/memberfundraisingdd)) or by contacting our UK headquarters using the information on page 3.**



# Prayers and answers

**As we approach the end of another year we have a lot to thank God for:**

## Praise God

**Several new members** have joined Wycliffe in the UK to serve overseas, both in language related work and in support roles, such as teaching, IT, accountancy and communications.

**Tim, Ali and Dan Robinson**, who were featured in Words for Life last year, have made the move to Nigeria. We thank God for the way he has provided for them in so many ways.

This year we have been blessed by the focus on the **400th anniversary of the King James**

## News in brief

We are sad to have to share the news of the death of **Gillian Hansford**, who, with her husband Keir, was featured in the last edition of Words for Life.

Gillian had been suffering with failing health and was taken to be with the Lord on the 7th July.

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**Our Scotland office has moved. The new address is on the third page of this magazine.**

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Wycliffe will be holding a public celebration on **Saturday 4th February 2012** at Union Baptist Church in High Wycombe. All are welcome, from faithful supporters of many years to those who are new to Wycliffe and Bible translation. More information about the day is available by calling us (page 3) or by visiting our website [wycliffe.org.uk/conference](http://wycliffe.org.uk/conference)

**Bible.** As churches have celebrated what it means to have had the Scriptures in English for so long, we've celebrated with them, while also raising awareness of the many millions of people who aren't as fortunate as we are.

**God has provided** so much, in many more ways than we expected. At the end of another year it's good for us to look back and praise him for all he has given to us.

## We also continue to pray for some specific areas:

### Pray for

**The church in the UK.** While it has been great to see the church getting excited about the Bible in 2011, it would be a shame if in 2012 it was lost amid the Olympics. Instead, please pray that the enthusiasm of those who have re-engaged with Scripture in 2011 would continue to grow.

**Ongoing Bible translation.** Wycliffe members from around the world are involved in over 1,500 translation projects. Each situation is different and we could fill multiple magazines with the different needs – visas, health, schooling for children, spiritual attack, personal loss, homesickness, financial worries – but God knows each one. Pray that he would be glorified in every situation.

### For Wycliffe in the UK:

**Staffing** in the UK is a challenge. We have a real need for full-time workers who can serve God at our Centre near High Wycombe.

We are thankful to God for the way he has continued to provide **financially** for Wycliffe. But we also recognise that it's only by the kind donations of supporters that we continue to support Bible translation in the way that we do.

Our work is a true **partnership**. Without the support of Christians in the UK we wouldn't exist. Please pray that more people would catch the vision of Bible translation and would hear about Wycliffe.



**Xavier, one of the leaders of the Tarikhi ya Haakhi (Way of Truth) community of believers in Angoche, Mozambique, lifts his hands in worship. Each week Xavier and other followers of Jesus in the Koti community meet together to receive training in how to share the Word of God with fellow speakers of Ekoti. Before each training session begins, they take time to worship the Lord and pray for one another. They are using the portions of Scripture translated into Ekoti as soon as it's available, both to encourage and strengthen one another and show the Light of Truth to their community.**

Photo: Søren Kjeldgaard



“a haven of refreshment  
and encouragement”

This was the verdict of one church group after holding their retreat at the Wycliffe Centre.

Located in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty between London and Oxford, up to 160 guests can be accommodated on this 22 acre site.

By holding an event at the Wycliffe Centre you will be supporting Bible translation around the world.

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