

Every nation, tribe, people and language in Jesus' presence International Decade of Indigenous Languages WINTER **2022** Stories: » Be still and know » Diasporas of Melbourne Project » Chinese website » Christ transforming culture (Vanuatu) » Sitting at Jesus' feet (Northern Australia) » The gift of being present » On the right path: translation in Timor-Leste

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WYCLIFFE TODAY

Winter 2022, Vol. 10 / No. 2 Published by: Wycliffe BibleTranslators Australia 70 Graham Road Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097 ABN 22 004 705 953



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# Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

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# Editorial from the CEO

'Every nation, tribe, people and language'

Revelation 7:9 tells us that, standing before the throne and before the lamb in heaven, will be a 'great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language'.



One of the biggest issues in Bible translation today is the alarming rate of language extinction. An estimated 40% of the 7,151 languages used worldwide are at some level of endangerment.\* Indigenous languages are particularly vulnerable because many of them are not taught at school or used in the public sphere.

Organisations around the world have long been advocating for minority people groups and indigenous languages. We are excited that UNESCO has recognised the importance of indigenous languages with the declaration of the 'International Decade of Indigenous Languages' from 2022-2032.

Research has shown that when Indigenous Australian communities speak and learn traditional languages it improves wellbeing by providing a sense of belonging and empowerment. Educational, economic and social outcomes improve when children are taught in their first language, especially in the early years.

This edition of Wycliffe Today explores how Bible translation is creating opportunities for language communities throughout the world. Be encouraged by stories of people from various cultures, languages and people groups experiencing the peace and presence of Jesus through a deeper understanding of God's Word in a language that speaks to their hearts.

Max Sahl



Like you, we believe in Wycliffe's mission. For over 22 years, our pre-paid funerals have continued to create hope from sadness, because our profits are proudly re-invested back into Wycliffe's work. Find out more at bethelfunerals.com.au/wycliffe



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# Transformed by the Word Be still and know

by Lyn Wake

Be still, and know that I am God!
I will be honoured by every nation.
I will be honoured throughout the world.
Psalm 46:10 (NLT)

Behind every one of Wycliffe Australia's strategic goals and actions is the longing for God to be honoured in all the earth. But how do we do this? How should we use our unique roles to honour God in our spheres of influence? By working harder and faster?

God revealed his answer to the writer of Psalm 46. Within the context of a world turned upside down, the psalmist sang a worship song that echoed the rhythms of God's heartbeat for his creation: 'Be still, and know that I am God'. In other words, 'Stop! Cease striving! Be quiet in my presence so you can truly know me!'

God's formula for working with us in his world has not changed. It may be counterintuitive and feel impossible to obey at times, especially in our own period of distress and distraction. Yet we too are given this simple answer to rest in the Lord.

When we practise the discipline of stillness, we come to know God more intimately. Then we grow more confident in his control over all things. God himself ensures that he is honoured in our lives and all over the world - that is his job! Ours is to be still, and come to know him as our refuge and strength. God will empower us to participate in all he has called us to do.

Every nation, tribe and people will one day be presented before God's throne of grace. But this will only come to fruition when we obey his call to be still and know him more intimately. What beautiful freedom we can enjoy when we understand that the weight of the world is not for our shoulders, but for his.

**For reflection:** How can you incorporate stillness into your life for the express purpose of knowing God more intimately?

# Be transformed by the Word as you engage with Psalm 46

**Prayer:** Lord, in my distress and distraction, please help me learn to be still and know you more. It is my desire to honour you, along with all the nations of the earth. Amen.





by Alfinda Herman

# Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!

1 Chronicles 16:11 (ESV)

After I dropped off my children at school, I was eager to get started on my long to-do list. I walked past my neighbour's house and she was standing by her door. We greeted each other with the usual small talk. Then she said, 'Come in, let's have coffee'. One part of my brain was thinking about the clock and was tempted to say, 'I'm sorry but I can't today'. But a little voice said 'Are you kidding? Go!' I'm glad that voice won.

We have been living here in Skopje, Macedonia, since the middle of 2021 but this was my first time stepping inside my neighbour's home. She served up some Turkish coffee (the standard drink here in the Balkans), orange juice and some sweets. She told me that her sister had recently, and suddenly, passed away at just 28 years of age. She recounted the day of her sister's passing two or three times. She was clearly mourning, even if it was without tears. I was glad I could sit with her, listen to her, and keep her company. I didn't have enough language ability to say anything profound, but perhaps it wasn't a bad thing.

It would have been too easy for me to pass up a coffee and a chat in pursuit of more 'productive' work that day. This was a humbling reminder that the process of changing my mindset from being 'task-oriented' to 'relationship-oriented' is still far from finished. I'm challenged to keep training my instinct to prioritise 'being' over 'doing'. After all, our God's primary way of blessing people is through his presence. I want to be more like him.



For more information about the Scripture translation and literacy education work Alfinda and Aidan Herman are doing with the Roma people in Europe, go to wycliffe.org.au/member/aidan-alfinda/



by Deb Fox

The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL) has one non-Australian family serving with a local translation organisation in Timor-Leste. Peter\* explains that an opportunity in 2007 to teach in Portuguese at the national university in Timor-Leste led to where they are today:

During that time, we realised the large number of languages and the translation needs on this little island. We put it all before God, and since then, we have been involved in the language work and translation ministry in Timor-Leste.

Peter's wife, Maria,\* is a translation coordinator and looks after administration and finance. Peter coordinates two language projects and has the enormous task of language documentation and research for more than 20 languages indigenous to Timor-Leste. He shares:

We are producing literacy books and small books in about eight different languages and looking into the production of dictionaries and language material. At the beginning of the pandemic, SIL produced a booklet about COVID-19. We were fortunate to have a great team that could put together this booklet in nine local languages.



The language work among Timorese language communities has been an ongoing task for many years but Peter says he is grateful to 'see the seeds of our work growing in different soils'. At the end of the checking process for John's Gospel, Peter was moved by a Timorese pastor who had been involved in the translation for more than 20 years:

This pastor started to pray so powerfully in the Holy Spirit, expressing his commitment to the Word of God and desire to have it fully translated for his own people. Everyone in the room could feel the honour of being part of what God is doing through this project. When we see people using the translations and testifying that they are understanding in a clear and natural way, we can see we are on the right path.

# Please pray for:

- ongoing safety for Peter and Maria and their young daughter
- the COVID-19 situation in the area to soon be controlled
- adaptation and creativity in a changing ministry
- encouragement and strength for the seven local Timorese people on the project
- more people to join the work.

# 'Sitting at Jesus' feet': leaning into God's grace

PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

Tim and Jane Letcher have been serving in Epenarra, Central Australia, with their three young children. After marrying, they both attended Sydney Missionary and Bible College and started praying about how they could serve the Lord.

Tim developed a passion for Aboriginal ministry. He shares how his experience with Scripture engagement among Indigenous Australian communities continues to motivate him in the work God has laid on his heart:

I spent some time teaching at Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley (northern Western Australia). I saw many people having trouble engaging with Scripture - it was in English but not available in the languages that they understood best. So that's been a huge motivator - helping people understand God's Word as clearly as possible.

Tim has been working with some local speakers to record the first few chapters of 1 Samuel into Alyawarr. This Old Testament book, in particular, speaks to animistic cultures about learning to trust in God rather than other people, powers or spirits. It also demonstrates God's desire for personal relationship and a change of heart, rather than something transactional. As Samuel says to King Saul, 'What pleases the Lord more? Burnt offerings and sacrifices, or obeying the Lord?' - 1 Samuel 15:22a (NIRV). Tim explains:

Many people here are quite nominal in their faith. They want to follow God as their 'boss man' but there is so much social pressure that pulls them away from church. They have trouble understanding grace. They think that they have to be these 'perfect' people in order to come back to God and learn more about him. We want to encourage them that God wants them to come to him just as they are.

Jane adds that they have been encouraged by the power of the gospel changing lives from the inside out:

Our neighbour became a Christian last year and it has totally transformed her life! She witnesses her faith wherever she goes. She told us that she was in a really bad spot when God reached her. She uses this to encourage people that the gospel actually does make a difference in people's lives and it touches people at different times.

Jane shares how this experience, in addition to her own Bible reading, has reminded her to lean into God's grace:

We are learning to implement safe boundaries with others and give the hard things over to God. Recently, a few really heavy things landed on me and I was feeling unsettled. I was buzzing around the kitchen to make things for those who were suffering and I was reading the story of Mary and Martha. Martha was concerned with urgent needs around her, yet Jesus said that only one thing was needed – to enjoy his presence. I realised that I also really just needed to sit at Jesus' feet. When there is so much going on, it can feel like you're wading through darkness. BUT our job is to sit at Jesus' feet and encourage others to sit at his feet with us.



### Please pray for:

- Indigenous Australian Christians to persevere in their faith
- more men to be changed by the gospel
- God to continue moving in the hearts and minds of people in Epenarra
- the Letchers as they settle back into life in Perth for a period of rest.



by Deb Fox

It all started with a simple WhatsApp message. Diana\* contacted SIL Australia about wanting to connect with other Hazaragi speakers in Australia.

Word soon reached SIL Australia Principal Education Officer, Graham Scott, and he met up with Diana and her family to discuss ways of caring for the needs of the Hazara community in Melbourne (the largest population of speakers outside of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan). Just two weeks later, SIL Australia was invited to attend a Persian New Year festival. The SIL Australia team had a stall and a constant stream of people eager to chat about their language needs. There was also great interest generated in the Hazaragi language resources that were available, free of charge.

Graham says that the need for connection and belonging among diaspora groups is what motivated him to develop the Diasporas of Melbourne Project along with linguists Jack Hibbard and Tomer Opat. The team wants to discover the needs of diaspora groups in their home city of Melbourne and support them to improve literacy and language use among their communities. The pilot for the Diasporas of Melbourne Project is less than a year old but it is already creating a buzz among diaspora groups in Australia.

But what exactly are diaspora groups and why is it so important to reach them? The term 'diaspora' refers to a group of people who have left their indigenous homelands and are now scattered throughout the world. The term derives from the Greek words dia 'across' and speirein to 'scatter'. Diaspora groups often share the same language or ethnicity, a strong, united community or a network of families or friends with a common ideology.

Graham says that many within diaspora groups are refugees who carry with them trauma from their original homelands and struggle to connect with their new surroundings:

With over 250 languages being spoken in the city of Melbourne, many of these diaspora groups are small and under-resourced. Urban spaces often pose a challenge for creating a sense of community so we want to be good neighbours by making diaspora groups feel welcomed and supported.

The team also says that even in the challenges of their new lives in Melbourne, diaspora communities have great resilience, are remarkably resourceful and determined to find new ways to live and make ends meet.



The Diasporas of Melbourne Project has been meeting with language groups to ask them how SIL Australia can support their goals of furthering language use, improving literacy, supporting educational programs, and a range of other activities that help to connect them with their communities.



For more information, or to support the project, go to sila.org.au/diaspora/ or connect with it on facebook.com/profile.php?id=100075910085707





On the auspicious date of Chinese New Year (Tuesday, 1 February 2022) an exciting event took place: the 'soft launch' of the Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia Chinese language website.

The team is preparing to hold an official launch on another special occasion - Pentecost (Sunday, 5 June 2022).

Jessie Wei is a Wycliffe representative for the Chinese diaspora in Australia who is fluent in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Jessie, along with Wycliffe Australia Board member Fai Peng Chen and Wycliffe Australia member Ming Fang Strickland, helped to get the website project started with research, translation, and checking. Jessie is now focusing on her role as a rep and is passionate about connecting with the Chinese diaspora, sharing:

A diaspora group has its own language and culture. My role with Wycliffe connects me with [the Chinese diaspora] and, by God's grace, enables us to minister to each other. Communicating with [the Chinese diaspora] in their heart language and in a culturally sensitive manner can certainly help. Chinese is the second largest population group in Australia (other than the native English speaking group). More and more Chinese churches are becoming aware of the need for Bible translation. If we communicate with Chinese people in their heart language, we can better serve them and invite them to be part of God's mission, grow in Christlikeness and invite them to be part of extending his kingdom.

Data from the last census revealed that around 20 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home. The second and fourth most common languages include Mandarin (2.5 per cent) and Cantonese (1.2 per cent). Immigrants from the Chinese mainland were also the third largest group of any foreign-born people in Australia in 2020.

John Tan is the Information Technology and Communication (ITC) Manager at Wycliffe Australia. He maintains Wycliffe Australia's website and 'played the webmaster role' to create the Chinese website, which he says is a helpful tool for inviting Chinese churches to partner in the work of Bible translation:

Wycliffe Australia realises the need to use the Chinese language as we share about Bible translation needs around our country. It is difficult to engage with Chinese folk in our community without knowing Mandarin - that's where the new website comes in. The tiny bit of Chinese I know helped, as I understand how the language flows, but I would not have been able to do my part successfully if not for the support of the team around me.



Wen Lee Kuan is a Wycliffe member who has also been involved in the development of the website by recruiting people to help with the translation and checking the back translations as content is added to the site. She shares:

The soft launch helped to connect us with Chinese churches. Having a website that's in Chinese characters is such a great tool for reaching Chinese congregations. We can understand their needs and work together. We're excited about the official launch that's due to take place on Pentecost - what a special gift to celebrate the translation in honour of the miracle of God speaking to people in their own languages!



For more information about the launch of the website, contact info@wycliffe.org.au

<sup>1</sup> Numbers based on the 2016 census. New data from the 2021 census is due to be released in June 2022. 'Census reveals a fast changing, culturally diverse nation' media release 20, June 2017, https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/media%20release3, Retrieved 17 April 2022.

 $^2$  Table 5.1 Estimated resident population, by country of birth(a), Australia, as at 30 June, 1996 to 2020(b)(c)". Australian Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved 22 April 2022.

# **Christ transforming culture:** training the trainers in Scripture engagement

Ross and Lyndal Webb are Wycliffe Australia members who work with SIL Vanuatu. After many years in the country, they are currently working remotely from their home in Sydney.

Their goal is to help the people of Vanuatu to read and understand God's Word. Ross says he has learnt that honouring the culture of a language group is important - but no culture is without flaws in our fallen world. Without a clear understanding of how God's Word applies to different contexts, churches and individuals risk creating an unhelpful mix of Christian doctrine with non-biblical beliefs.

He shares:

It's easy for people to grasp when [the Bible] says 'don't do this' and 'do that' but it's hard to help people operate via principles from Scripture. We try to show how the Bible applies to daily life. It's good to celebrate the positive aspects of a culture but it's not helpful when there are features of that culture fighting against biblical living. There are genuine Christians, and lots of churches, but the idea of faith challenging culture is often a bit hard for many people to take. It says in Ephesians 4:22 that there are parts that we need to 'add on' to our lives and view of God. It stands to reason, then, that unhelpful aspects of our cultures need to be cut off. The best way to do that is to look at what it says about godly living from God's Word.

Ross says that superstition and sorcery are still commonly accepted in Vanuatu:

People often suspect others of being sorcerers. Many believe that sorcery of different sorts, or ill feelings against someone, have the power to make people sick. That's why I put together a study on what God says about sorcery. We need people to understand why beliefs like these are not good or helpful to Christian life.

Lyndal explains how these issues are addressed when training local church and community leaders:

We try to establish a strong foundation in the training, asking questions like: 'Why do we translate the Bible? Why do this hard work to read and understand it accurately? Why study topics such as sorcery and marriage?' We're trying to help people read the Bible in context. We want people to know the true God of the Bible rather than one that they may invent.

> Ross adds that the training program is designed to help prepare the next generation of leaders in ni-Vanuatu translation:

SIL Vanuatu's director is encouraging us to 'train the trainers' because our current trainers are getting older. SIL Vanuatu has taken on two ni-Vanuatu men as interns to learn

various aspects of Bible translation and Scripture engagement. We need more learners like these guys with a desire to not only share God's Word but also be transformed by it.

The next training courses were originally planned for April and May but COVID-19 lockdowns put things on hold until borders open up again.

### Please pray:

- for stamina and balance as the Webbs work remotely
- for new Wycliffe members due to arrive in Vanuatu
- that trainers and participants attending the training will hold fast to the truth in the Bible
- for God to be merciful on Vanuatu and prevent more suffering from COVID-19.



For more information about the training courses, go to wycliffe.org.au/projects/translator-trainingvanuatu/

# Ministry Resourcing WINTER 2022 / ISSN 2202-9818



# What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?

Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer. Our three main objectives are to:

- work closely with national Bible translation organisations under the Next Step Development initiative
- support strategic partnerships with SIL International
- support Australian members on the field with their project needs.

# **Partnership**

Water Tanks for the Young Missionary Alliance (PNG) **Project 8877 (WRDF)** 



Wycliffe Relief and Development
Foundation partners with reputable, local
organisations in regions of urgent need.
With the support of the Foundation, these
partners deliver effective and efficient
assistance to communities disadvantaged
by natural disasters, economic hardship,
crises, or inadequate access to basic health
care, clean water, sanitation or education.

This year, WRDF is pleased to announce that two new organisations have been added to our list of partners. One partner is in India and we provided support to them through our COVID-19 project. The second is a new organisation in PNG, committed to helping the community in practical ways that show God's love to those in need.

We are particularly excited about this relationship with our nearest neighbours in the Pacific. We have also started funding literacy projects in volatile areas of Cameroon. As always, we are encouraged by your prayers and financial support. We invite you to continue sharing in the privilege of being able to serve those in need.

by Greg Conwell, Wycliffe Relief and Development CEO

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation has started working with a new group in Papua New Guinea called the Young Missionary Alliance (YMA). Formed in 2017, the group is composed of university students and young Christian professionals who are Papua New Guinea nationals with a heart for helping others in practical ways.

WRDF has provided funding for YMA's first project: two water tanks and associated equipment in the village of Vakuta. Ongoing droughts have affected the island's water supply, severely depleting access to safe drinking water. Working with local community leaders, YMA has been involved in assessing the project's viability, purchasing and installing water tanks and equipment, and monitoring their ongoing usage.

The cost for the water tanks was A\$8,000, as no labour costs were involved. The next stage in this project is to provide further water security measures and training. Additional materials and training for the region have been budgeted at a total of A\$30,000 for the rest of 2022.

Target: A\$40,000 for 2022

Go to wycliffefoundation.org.au/pacific/png/yma-water-tanks/for more information.

# Next Step Development Projects

The mission of Next Step Development is to hear and understand what God has put on the hearts of our national colleagues, and through prayer to come alongside and support their vision and strategies for Bible translation. Next Step is currently working in close relationship with Wycliffe Global Alliance partners from PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Philippines and two countries in South Asia.

To see more Next Step projects, go to wycliffe.org.au/projects/

# Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation Projects

Wycliffe Relief and Development
Foundation is a separate company
owned by Wycliffe Australia, which works
through local partners to improve the
practical aspects of life in marginalised
communities. We aim to demonstrate
Christian compassion and provide
practical assistance in literacy and
education, disaster relief, medical and
basic health support. Donations to the
Foundation are tax-deductible.

For WRDF projects, visit the WRDF website wycliffefoundation.org.au

# Wycliffe Field Support Projects

Wycliffe Australia is committed to helping our field teams and the organisations they work with to thrive and serve effectively in their communities. Ministry Resourcing can help with providing funding for computers, village housing, travel costs, delivery of training, consultants and other services.

See more projects at wycliffe.org.au/projects/

# Cameroon Child Trauma Healing Project 8898 (WRDF)



# South Asia 1 Education and Health Project 8880 (WRDF)





Since 2016, the regions of North-West and South-West Cameroon have been facing continual violence. According to UNICEF, over 300,000 school-age children in Cameroon have been displaced as their families seek refuge in places that they hope are a little safer. Armed groups in control of the region have declared a 'no-schools' policy, resulting in 80% of children denied schooling over a number of years. The goal of this project is to equip teachers, parents and guardians of these children to deal with the trauma, and return to normal life and education.

We are now in the third and final year of a project managed by SIL Cameroon. Good progress has been made in training teachers and interacting with traumatised students. In this final year, 'train-the-trainer' sessions will take place with teachers who have already run the course to share their knowledge and skills with others. Negotiations will also continue with government authorities to make use of the program throughout the country.

### Target: A\$23,000 for 2022

Go to wycliffefoundation.org.au/africa/cameroon-child-traumahealing/ for more information.



Poverty among the tribal peoples in this country is generally a result of their alienation from mainstream society, often caused by illiteracy, poor health and stigma. The aim of this project is to bring hope to two different communities by creating learning centres and running awareness/advocacy meetings, health events, and livelihood development activities. The project will also liaise with the government to ensure that local people become aware of the various citizen benefit schemes available. Livelihood development will be encouraged by tailoring classes so that community members can learn a new skill and produce clothing that can be sold at markets.

The project will work with at least two villages in one community, and three villages in a second (geographically separate) community. Our project partner has, with our support, previously successfully run similar community development projects in other isolated communities over the past three years and is confident of equally positive outcomes with these new communities.

# Target: A\$40,000 for 2022

Go to: wycliffefoundation.org.au/asia/south-asia/south-asia-education-basic-health-care-clean-water-technical-training/for more information.



# PROJECT UPDATE COVID-19 Relief

Project 8874 (WRDF)



# Translator Training in Vanuatu Project 8343 (WFSP)





# (Project now closed)

WRDF distributed a total of A\$165,000 for COVID-19 relief in 2020 and 2021, through 6 different partners in 4 different countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Funds were spent on staple foods and basic necessities, education on COVID-19 prevention, and translation of COVID-19 information into local languages.



SIL Vanuatu runs a course in translation principles and techniques that includes Bible reading and comprehension as well as applying Scripture in practical ways. This training is key to improving the capabilities of local translators as they gain insight from closely examining a text and asking questions to determine the author's intention.

Funding covers the costs for facility hire, materials, travel, meals, and accommodation for the participants. Each training workshop costs over \$10,000 to run.

### Target: A\$32,000 for 2022





If you would like to discuss any of the Ministry Resourcing projects, please contact:

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Greg Conwell: ceo@wycliffefoundation.org.au

Or call (03) 9712 2777