



Wycliffe Today

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Our story in God's story

WINTER
2023

Stories:

- » This is my story, this is my song
- » Trained to share the good news
- » Children learning the signs of Easter
- » The story behind the painting
- » Tennis to translation
- » The silver lining of endurance
- » Creatively telling God's story

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Editorial from the CEO



I was given a historical document recently by a retired Wycliffe member. The document was entitled 'Notes on the commencement of WBT-SIL in Australia, by Alfred Coombe'. It explains some of the early history around the establishment of Wycliffe Australia from 1948 to 1963.

I found this part quite amusing:

At a meeting of the International Missionary Fellowship Executive held in May 1948 at the Keswick Book Depot, 315 Collins St., Melbourne, amongst other things, Mr. Robert Story told the members that there was a movement called Wycliffe Bible Translators who were able to translate the languages of illiterate people.* This was news of great import and the matter was discussed with some enthusiasm.

Well, here we are today. That matter which was 'discussed with some enthusiasm' 75 years ago is still being discussed and pursued with enthusiasm in 2023. To think of all the stories that could be told of the faithfulness and goodness of God to all those people who stepped out in faith and obedience to take the good news found in God's Word to the ends of the earth, well it just makes me smile.

It is God's story that is playing out around the world and we each have our stories to tell in his story.

Max Sahl

** While we would no longer use the same terms Robert used at that initial meeting to describe the work of Bible translation, his efforts enabled Wycliffe Australia to become what it is today by encouraging the establishment of a Bible translation organisation in Australia to assist local language communities.*

BETHEL FUNERALS

Bethel Funerals' story began in 1997 as a business that provides Christ-like care to grieving families—while also financially supporting Wycliffe Australia. To date, Bethel Funerals has given back over \$4 million to Wycliffe Australia.

When families choose Bethel Funerals, they receive genuine Christian care from our funeral team and contribute to the continued sharing of God's story with marginalised language communities.



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Transformed by the Word This is my story, this is my song



by Lyn Wake

*He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God. Many will
see what he has done and be amazed. -
Psalm 40:3a (NLT)*

Fanny Crosby had a significant story to tell, and she told it prolifically through the writing of more than 8,000 worship songs! Fanny was blind from infancy, yet grateful to God for spiritual sight. An American poet, hymnist and mission worker, Fanny was known as the 'Queen of Gospel Song Writers'. Many of her songs still resound more than a century after she faithfully walked the earth. One in particular is embedded in my spirit. Perhaps you can sing along with me:

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long,
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour, all the day long.*

What is your story? What is your song? Perhaps you are in a season of sorrow, unsure of how your story will unfold. You may even be heading towards the last chapter of your story on earth. But friends, when our stories are united with Christ and woven together with his, we always have an *extraordinarily precious* life song to sing!

When my story felt like it was totally falling apart, God kindly showed me how he was integrating everything into its rightful place within his-story. Priceless promises from Psalm 40 assured me how he was going to transform cruel circumstances into an unimaginable redemption story. My life song is not over, and neither is yours. May our life stories sing in harmony with God's glories – now and forevermore!

For reflection: How can I be more attuned and attentive to the life stories of others?

Be transformed by the Word as you engage with: Psalm 40

Prayer: Lord of all our stories, I want my life to sing that you are mine! Whatever chapter I am experiencing, may I be given the grace to sing your praises all day long. Amen.

Trained to share the good news

The Bible is filled with stories that point to God's love for us. How can we share these stories with others? Wycliffe Australia has been running Story the Bible workshops for many years to engage the church and equip people with skills to share Bible stories in simple, accurate and engaging ways.

Josh Bartlett is a Wycliffe Australia member and Board member who has been involved in leading several of these workshops. He says, 'It is so encouraging to hear of participants applying what they've learnt'. Josh recalls a workshop held in Maleny, Queensland, at the end of 2022 that left a particular impression on one of the participants. After attending the training, a young man by the name of Liam immediately began using the skills he had acquired in his walk-up evangelism. Liam reflected:

I had a bit of a funny encounter doing walk-up evangelism — the guy we were chatting to asked me, out of the blue, if I had any Bible stories to tell him. So I told him the crucifixion story. We spent some time chatting about the different ways people respond to Jesus. He asked if good people go to heaven, so we looked at the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Towards the end of the conversation, he was able to identify himself as a sinner who was ignoring God and needing forgiveness. He was amazed at the switch between Barabbas and Jesus, and likewise that the tax collector was the one who was justified by God, not the Pharisee.

MORE

For more information about a Story the Bible workshop in your area, go to [wycliffe.org.au/eventtype/story-the-bible-workshop/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/eventtype/story-the-bible-workshop/)



Children learning the signs of Easter

In that day the deaf will hear words read from a book, and the blind will see through the gloom and darkness. - Isaiah 28:18 (NLT)

Do you remember listening to Bible stories in Sunday School? For many Deaf children, there are very few resources available for them to learn more about God's love for them. So far, only American Sign Language (ASL) has the full Bible available. Australian Sign Language (Auslan) only has a few books translated and does not have any resources to support Scripture engagement. Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia members Saul and Rebecca Thurrowgood want to change that.



The Thurrowgoods have been working in partnership with the Bible Society to create animated Bible stories for children in Auslan. The Christmas story was released at the end of 2022 and an Easter message was recently published. The videos are based on evangelical children's booklets the Bible Society produced a couple of years ago. They have been created using the motion capture Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool called 'Chameleon' which Saul and his team have been refining for the past 10 years and which converts the signed movements from a real person to an animated character.

Saul explains:

Last year, the Bible Society wanted to see if they could use Chameleon for translation projects and they came to check it out. We trialled the technology with the Christmas story and were thrilled that it worked so well. The second time around, everything worked even more smoothly with the Easter story.

All the characters are consistent throughout the series. It's been a long time building up but we're finally seeing fruit from all the years of hard work to get Chameleon off the ground.

Rebecca adds:

I've been thinking a lot about creating resources for kids to put online to equip the church. These videos are like a seed – the first in a way of creating resources for Deaf children. Auslan has its own linguistic style that is very poetic visually that would not translate the same way in spoken English. These videos provide the stories in a form that kids can easily understand. We have a dream for the Deaf community to be able to connect with the gospel. The children's stories we've created using Chameleon so far will hopefully be a good start.



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY REBECCA THURROWGOOD

PRAY:

- for more people to join the team! We need workers highly skilled in programming, computer science, AI, computer vision and robotics
- that the Auslan translation of the Easter story can continue to be shared with Deaf children throughout Australia and open their hearts to the love of Jesus
- for the languages and countries that have shared an interest in using Chameleon.

VIEW

To watch the videos, go to
www.youtube.com/wycliffeaustralia

THE STORY *behind the painting*

They say a picture can paint a thousand words, capturing the emotion contained in a single moment in time.

This painting celebrates an important moment when two young men in the Philippines got to read God's Word in their own language for the very first time on the day the Keley-i New Testament was dedicated in 1980.

Artist, Meryl Sorenson, shares that she created the painting because she wanted to help others understand and celebrate Bible translation. Her painting *A Celebration of Bible Translation* was purchased at an auction in Queensland, Australia to raise money for mother-tongue translator training (MTT) and national translation consultant training. Meryl's sister, Jenelle, supported her husband, Bert, while he worked on the translation of the Keley-i Old Testament to complete the whole Bible. Their legacy has left a lasting impression on Meryl and influenced her decision to paint the scene.

Bert and Jenelle Maddawat were from two different worlds. They met in the Philippines in 1977 and quickly developed a deep love for one another. A Filipino guy and an Aussie girl from vastly different cultures and races, they were brought together by a shared love for serving God and bringing his Word to people in the languages they understand best.

Yet their passion for getting God's Word to people in the languages they understand best meant that their marriage was delayed a few years. Bert was a dedicated Bible translator working with a small team of other local speakers and Dick and Lou Hohulin from the USA, to complete a translation of the New Testament into the Keley-i language. As much as he loved his dear Jenelle, his number one priority was getting the gospel message into the hands and hearts of the Keley-i speakers.

In 1980, the Keley-i New Testament was published and dedicated. It was a joyful celebration and a time that cemented Bert's love for his soon-to-be bride. The young couple was married later that year and began some busy years of working and raising their four children in Australia.

But, after a number of years, God called them back to Bible translation. Dick and Lou Hohulin were looking for a skilled worker to join them again in another nearby language translation.

Bert was also fluent in the neighbouring language of Tuwali. In 1994, he, supported by Jenelle, and a team from SIL completed the Tuwali New Testament. By 2004, they had finished the complete Tuwali Bible. They also went on to complete the Keley-i Bible in 2008. The Maddawats were part of translating two full Bibles and providing thousands of people with Bibles in the languages they understand best.

Today, there are an estimated 8,000 Keley-i speakers and 30,000 people who speak Tuwali as their first language. Praise God that these communities now have access to God's Word in the languages that speak to their hearts.



*A CELEBRATION OF BIBLE TRANSLATION,
OIL ON CANVAS BY MERYL SORENSON.*

Tennis to translation

By Belinda Fox

*'God doesn't want your money. He wants you!'
It was as though God was speaking directly to me when the preacher spoke those words at my church's missions conference in 2007.*

I thought that, by giving financially, I had done what he was asking me to do. But that night in my heart I told God, 'I don't know when, where, how or why, but if you want me to serve you, I will'.

One year later, I was chatting with my mixed doubles tennis opponent in between matches. The topic of linguistics (my university major) came up and I learned that he used to be a Wycliffe Australia member involved with Bible translation in Africa. I hadn't heard of Wycliffe before but I knew that God was behind this encounter. Less than a week later, I had an appointment to meet with Jenny Austin, Wycliffe Australia's Assignments Coordinator!



My journey since then has not followed the typical route. I got to the field quickly and bypassed language school because I had already studied Indonesian at primary school, high school and university. I was assigned to a project in Papua (eastern Indonesia) largely because I had basic bookkeeping skills from my time as Treasurer of my tennis club! Through that role, God exposed me to a wide variety of ministry and cultural experiences, and to a people and place that won my heart.

I never expected or wanted to be a leader. It was hard enough to believe that God would use me as a cross-cultural worker; let alone a leader! But I knew he was asking me to take on the leadership of the Papuan Malay team in 2017 and that he would equip and teach me as I went. It wasn't easy and many times I felt I had failed miserably. But when I was forced to take a step back, God stepped in and brought that team to where they are today: thriving, passionate and driven by a sense of genuine ownership of the work God has entrusted them with.

As God was strengthening and growing the Papuan Malay team, he was also working on renewing me through a season of recovery from burnout. With a slight twist on the words he used to call me to ministry all those years ago, he spoke to me again: 'I don't need your service. I want you'. I spent a year just enjoying his presence and learning that anything I do for him can only bear fruit if it comes from my *being* with him (John 15:5).

That is the truth I hope to impart to others, and discover to greater depths for myself, through my new role as Wycliffe Australia Personnel Manager. This is yet another unexpected fork in the road that God is leading me along step by step. I could never have written a story like the one he is writing for me!



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY BELINDA FOX

The silver lining of endurance

By Kathy Cummins

I've cried a lot in my 17 years of literacy work. I've become frustrated, yelled at, and even hit people!

I'm not proud of my reactions but I have often found this life of language work hard and at times I wanted to give up.

The frustration comes from waiting around for people who say they'll come but never show up. It's teaching women literacy skills for two years but discovering that none of them have successfully learned to read and write. Added to this has been the anguish of getting ripped from our home and community due to civil war and not knowing if we could ever go back there.



Then, a glimmer of the rewards of endurance arrives. I realise that I can speak the language and mostly understand what native speakers say! Locals tell us they know that God loves them because he sent us to them! I see children I once cradled in my arms learning to read and write their language. A teenager I taught is now translating the Bible into his language!

We have been developing deep friendships, born of shared waiting, hardships, work, and life. We are helping the community render God's truths in the God-given intricacies of their language structure. What a privilege! This is the silver lining of endurance. I'm not sure how 'willingly' I am enduring, but the glimmer is there.

So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.
- 2 Timothy 2:10 (NLT)



PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY KATHY CUMMINS

Leaving a legacy: wills and bequests

For almost 70 years, the Lord has provided for the needs of Wycliffe Australia. Through the gifts of his people, we have been able to support a large number of Bible translation projects in progress and many that are just beginning. We continue to trust the Lord to provide for this need into the future. Have you considered making a bequest to support this vital work?

Your legacy could live on through Bible translation projects that help to transform language communities both now and for eternity.

MORE

For more information about leaving a gift to Wycliffe in your will, visit [wycliffe.org.au/support/make-a-bequest/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/support/make-a-bequest/) or email info@wycliffe.org.au

Creatively telling God's story

Ethnoarts or 'ethnic arts' enable language communities to tell stories using artforms from their culture, whether that be symbols, images, music, drama or dance.



Lucy Rogers, along with her husband Alan, has been leading songwriting workshops with Indigenous communities since the late 1980s to help them connect with and share God's story of love and redemption.

Lucy explains:

Communication is more than just language – the arts carry so much more meaning!

Song and dance are very strong media for sharing the gospel in Indigenous culture. God made each one of us and put us where we are for a reason. Just because you become a believer, it doesn't mean you have to throw your culture away. Our role is to help communities determine 'What is of God and what is not of God? What is good that you can use from your own art forms to tell his story?'

At a Katherine Christian Convention a few years ago, ladies from the Warlpiri language in the Tanami Desert, northwest of Alice Springs, shared a dance that they had created.

Lucy says:

The [Warlpiri] ladies felt it was important to create a dance to tell the gospel to their older people. They decided to do the Parable of the Ten Virgins [Matthew 25:1-13] but one of the older ladies – who was not a Christian at the time – wanted to create a dance that explained why Jesus was on the cross. In the process of talking about what repentance means and what it looks like to follow Jesus, the lady who suggested it came to the Lord herself! The dance (which was made in four parts) told the story of feeling sorry for sinning, kneeling before the Lord in repentance, giving their life back to the Lord and dancing away joyfully.

Like Lucy, Peter is a Wycliffe member with a passion for helping cultures use art to understand God better. Through the 'Arts for a Better Future' program in Dallas, Peter trains cross-cultural workers with the tools they need for working in language communities to research what artforms are suitable for storytelling. Peter also has experience with ethnoarts workshops in Papua New Guinea, Kenya, the Solomon Islands and Australian Indigenous communities.



Peter recalls a painting workshop north of Alice Springs where 8 Indigenous women were working on large canvases to explain the life of Abraham. When they had completed their artworks, passages from Genesis that related to each painting were read out in each person's language. Peter says:

It's exciting seeing people start to understand the Scriptures, having encountered God's Word through an artform like painting. The arts speak innately to their hearts. Seeing artists come to the Lord through encountering the Scriptures in their cultural creative language...there's really nothing like it.

PRAY:

- for more people to help with audio recording and editing
- that God would provide for the needs of 3 communities waiting for recording of their songs to begin
- for an ethnoarts workshop Lucy and teachers from Nungalinya College are planning for 2024
- for a painting workshop fellow ethnoarts trainer Wycliffe member, Ming Fang Strickland, is facilitating
- that God would continue making Scripture come to life through ethnoarts storytelling.

MORE

Watch stories of Australian Indigenous people sharing their faith at www.40stories.org.au

Ministry Resourcing

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Wycliffe
Bible Translators



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.

PHOTO BY ZEKE DU PLESSIS

Rewriting stories for a better future

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is proud to be supporting partner organisations in Asia, Africa and the Pacific by funding aid and community development projects. This edition of Ministry Resourcing features a range of tax-deductible projects that are helping poor and marginalised communities with hospital and medical supplies, literacy training, and skills development for generating sustainable income. See how you can play a role in helping communities rewrite their story for a better future.

by Greg Conwell, Wycliffe Relief and Development CEO

Bangladesh Medical Centre Project 8889



One of our partner organisations in Bangladesh has had a vision for many years to operate a small rural hospital to provide more cost-effective services to their local community. A previous medical building was destroyed by an earthquake but a new hospital has been built with more services and potential than the previous operation.

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation provided funds for an x-ray machine in 2019, which is currently in use. We recently visited the new hospital for the first time and were impressed with their vision and planning.

The hospital covers its basic operating costs from modest patient service fees but needs more funding to improve its services. The hospital hopes to improve efficiency by computerising patient records; buying basic operating equipment so a wider range of surgeries can be performed; and purchasing an ambulance for patient transport. Our aim is to provide the funds for the first two items and co-fund the ambulance with other funders.

Target: A\$33,000

MORE

Go to www.wycliffefoundation.org.au/ 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/

SIL Bangladesh Literacy and Community Empowerment Project 8888



SIL Bangladesh has been one of WRDF's foundational partners, achieving goals in literacy and improving the livelihoods of communities in various locations in Bangladesh. Together, we are planning further projects in new locations throughout Bangladesh, continuing to work among low income, marginalised rural communities that currently feel powerless and therefore have little hope for change. Our prayer is that these projects will be a catalyst for change, so that communities gain some degree of prosperity and self-respect.

Target: A\$60,000 per year

MORE

Go to www.wycliffefoundation.org.au/ for more information.

South Asia 1. Education and Community Empowerment Project 8880



Generations of illiteracy, poor health and a lack of education among minority groups in this country in South Asia have led to increased poverty and alienation from the rest of society. The aim of this project is to bring hope to multiple impoverished communities by creating learning centres and running awareness and advocacy meetings, health events, and livelihood development activities such as tailoring classes.

Our project partners are also liaising with the government to ensure that locals are aware of the various citizen benefit schemes available to them. Communities involved in this scheme are also being mobilised to form their own local committees for governance and management. Over time, it is hoped that each location will become self-sufficient.

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation has agreed to add a third location to this project in 2023 because the communities in which the project is currently running have found it so beneficial.

Target A\$60,000 (with potential to increase)

MORE

Go to www.wycliffefoundation.org.au/ for more information.



Cameroon Literacy Project 8878



PHOTO BY ZEKE DU PLESSIS

This is the second year of a three-year project run by SIL Cameroon that provides training for holding 'functional literacy classes' - teaching basic reading and writing skills that help communities with everyday tasks and communication. Eight different communities in Cameroon select two representatives to attend training sessions each year. These target communities are located in the Mandara Mountains and are among the poorest and most illiterate in the country. They have a strong attachment to their language which is still the main language of communication in the area.

Once trainees have completed their training, they are then responsible for mobilising their communities to organise teacher training and implement a local literacy program. The trainers are coached and mentored by SIL specialists. They also help to translate key books that raise community awareness of issues such as human rights, cultural and social issues, animal breeding and agriculture, health, nutrition, environment and business.

Target: A\$25,000

MORE

Go to www.wycliffefoundation.org.au/ for more information.

South East Asia Church Based Literacy Project 8818 Update



PHOTO BY DANIEL HANSEN

Most Bunong people living in Cambodia cannot read or write, not even in their own language. The Bunong community lacks access to resources that will enable them to address food security, health, and livelihood concerns. These communities are also vulnerable to climate changes and natural disasters. Wycliffe Australia is partnering with the Northeast Community Education and Development Organization (NCED) to support the communities with these needs.

Through this church-based project, literacy classes are being provided for a large number of participants through 19 different churches. One of these participants, Tom*, was overjoyed to attend the literacy classes. He explains how much his life has changed and the ways he is now giving back to the community as a trained literacy teacher himself:

When I became a Christian, there were no textbooks in the Bunong language. In fact, at that time there were no people literate in my language in our community. When I learned the Bunong language, I was able to read and write some Bunong script. I was then asked to teach Bunong literacy in the church. From then on, I became aware of how the Bunong language can be so valuable to our community for writing and making records in our language, in our script, and also for praising God. Now I can read and write in the Bunong language and I can even teach the students in our church. I thank God for the literacy support that has come to our church and for all the other teachers who helped us.

MORE

Go to wycliffe.org.au/projects/sea-church-based-literacy-nsd/ for more information.

*Names have been changed