

# Living Words

ISSUE  
NO. 13

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching,  
for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.



In my office on the bookshelf wall unit is a large scale model of a classic sailing yacht. It is a sloop rigged yacht from the 1920s.

There are many reasons why I like this model yacht, but an important one is the reminder that this vessel was solely powered by the force of the wind. There is no propeller at the stern being driven by an engine on board, unlike today, when so-called yachts and superyachts have become reliant on their own internal power propulsion units. Instead, the yachts of this by-gone era relied completely on the power of the wind, captured in the sails, to drive the yacht forward and ultimately reach its destination.

I grew up sailing in small sailboats and slowly progressed to larger ones. They were all totally reliant on the wind, with no other form of propulsion other than perhaps paddling with our hands. I learnt many an important lesson during those formative years and, most importantly, about the power and nuances of the wind.

Those lessons still impact me today, and in more recent years I have gained a deep appreciation of the correlation between a vessel solely powered by the wind, and organisations like ours, Wycliffe Bible Translators New Zealand. Much like many modern day yachts, I have observed that there are also many organisations which have foregone the use of sails, choosing instead to be powered by their own internal engine and form of propulsion, thus removing their dependency upon the wind (although that does not preclude them from still being dramatically impacted by the forces of the wind).

To extend this sailboat analogy further, we as an organisation are fully dependent on the force of the wind, but that does not exclude us from responsibility. In reality, we have the role of carefully monitoring the force and direction of the wind, *trimming the sails* and adjusting the steering, in order to maximise these forces to assist in driving the vessel forward in the direction we believe God is leading us.



Large model yacht in Rob's office

It is also worth noting that with sailing it is not possible to sail directly into the direction that the wind is coming from. In these circumstances, in order to maintain forward momentum, it becomes necessary to *tack* from side to side, to enable the sails to capture the force of the wind and provide forward motion. If not, the sails will flap, you end up *in irons*, and you cannot move forward.

There are many lessons for us here. I am sure you can think of some, and I would welcome your thoughts on this. For me, the most important is the reality that we are totally dependent upon God, and the *wind of the Holy Spirit* as an organisation. It also speaks to me of the importance of having an *eye on the wind and weather* at all times, and to be continuously making adjustments and trimming the sails with a well-coordinated *crew*.

Finally, and just as importantly, I want to recognize that it requires people with different gifts and capacity to crew such vessels. Through your involvement and participation with Wycliffe NZ, you are an important member of the “crew” as we sail toward the destination that God is leading us to.

For this edition of Living Words, we have chosen the theme ‘Trimming the Sails’. You will read stories and articles from our members where they too, are *trimming the sails* and making adjustments in light of the challenges and *head winds* we face today in the global mission context.

I hope you enjoy reading these articles, and I would love to hear from you further if you have insights and thoughts on this theme.

Together, “trimming the sails” for the Bible translation movement,

**Robert Lovatt**

Executive Director



# Wind-Powered Mission

BY ALEX WINSLADE

When I first inquired with Wycliffe, as a soon-to-finish-university student with an eagerness to impact the world, I thought I had to decide which of my two seemingly divergent passions to pursue. On the one hand, I was fascinated with linguistics, lighting up at any chance to pick apart a puzzling language phenomenon. On the other hand, I had a passion for ensuring all people were treated respectfully, regardless of ethnicity or culture, and saw this outworking itself best in community development efforts that equipped and empowered local people to make sustainable changes by prioritising their culture and autonomy. I was torn – analysing and preserving language was

most interesting to me, but it did not seem as fundamental as ensuring people’s voices were heard and respected, especially in regard to their wellbeing.

However, it was while reading a brochure sent to me by Wycliffe NZ’s Inquiries department, that I saw how Bible translation actually embodies both of my passions! The brochure described Bible translation as “sowing the seed, not transplanting churches,” because of the way that translating Scripture builds the indigenous church – one that is raised up by the Spirit of God out of people’s living response to God’s Word in their language. When Scripture is translated into people’s

heart language, it is available for reflection, study and application through the Holy Spirit, and removes any dependency that would limit freedom of development.

I realised that Bible translation, while inherently involving language preservation, also inherently honours and recognises local culture by making room for the Spirit to move in whatever way the people respond best. The whole purpose behind Bible translation is to make a way for people to encounter God through His Word, rather than telling them what God has to say to them. And **by creating opportunity for people to encounter God, we are creating space for God’s Spirit to move.**

From this, it is evident that being Spirit-led is central to the Bible translation mission. Not only is its purpose to have people living Spirit-led in response to His Word, but it is essential for those doing the work to also be led by the Holy Spirit. A theologian by the name of Alex Araujo created a metaphor for cross-cultural partnerships that depicts the importance of being Spirit-led, or to expand on his metaphor, being *wind-powered*.

Araujo first identifies two contrasting “paradigms of control”, typically determined by whether one is from Western culture or what he calls “majority-world” culture<sup>1</sup>. He explains how the Western way of living involves a high paradigm of control, where we can mostly control our material lives by defining objectives, gathering resources, and organising tasks. He goes on to state that “by gaining control over our material

environment, we have removed many of the uncertainties of life”<sup>1</sup>. One only has to take a look at the amount of anxiety and chaos that has ensued in many people’s lives since the Covid-19 pandemic removed much of that certainty, to see how much we liked and expected to be in control of our lives.

Araujo highlights this to point out that, since our culture revolves around the control of resources and processes, it is easy for this to become the default mode for ministry as well. He likens this form of ministry to a powerboat, which—in theory—goes wherever the captain directs, as long as they have planned well. But what happens when external factors affect the plan? He argues that cross-cultural mission is more effective, and more biblical, when it follows a paradigm of low control – like a sailboat, where **“success depends completely on [our] cooperation with the wind.”**<sup>1</sup>

According to Araujo, functioning from a “sailboat” paradigm of less control has a number of implications for carrying out effective cross-cultural mission:

- Depending on God means missions organisations can function with **greater mutuality and respect** for majority-world churches and leaders; functioning from a base of material power does not lead to mutual and equal partnership.
- **Building and maintaining relationships is primary**, and accomplishment is secondary; “if we

accomplish outcomes, yet fracture relationships and alienate people... [or] our prayer life has decreased and our trust in God has lessened, we have not succeeded”<sup>1</sup>.

- **The standard is faithfulness.** Service to God is not measured in terms of our plans, results and achievements. The parable of the bags of gold in Matthew 25:14-30 reminds us that faithfulness is the standard by which God will measure us.
- **It is important to embrace vulnerability.** High trust requires willingness to listen more carefully to others. “It is also frequently the starting place for deep personal growth and transformation.”<sup>1</sup>
- Sensitivity to context is important. Being quick to apply methods and plans of doing ministry in an overseas context might “quench an indigenous model for ministry that would be far

more effective”<sup>1</sup>. Trusting an external source provides a **greater willingness to consider and respect context.**

- God’s Word alive – implications for **the value of Scripture.** In the high-trust environment of the sailboat paradigm, Scripture, being a trustworthy and unchanging source of God’s instruction, is vital to how we go about fulfilling the Great Commission. The need is greater to trust God, be attuned to hearing His voice, and listen to the Holy Spirit.

We pitched this sailboat analogy (in much less detail) to some of our members, asking if they might be able to share from their experiences any parallels it has to their lives. In the articles that follow, you will read their response to that, and you just might start to identify some of the implications above woven throughout their stories.

1. Alex Araujo, Mary Lederleitner and Werner Mischke, “To Catch the Wind: A New Metaphor for Cross-Cultural Partnerships” in *The Beauty of Partnership Study Guide*, (67-72).

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BY ROB LOVATT

# More Than a Destination

Last year, in an interview on one of the earlier episodes of our Story of Hope podcast, I was asked the question: “What has impacted you the most in your 30 plus years with Wycliffe?”

In response, I said it was seeing how we as a family of organisations have responded and adapted to the winds of change in the missions movement, that has impacted me most.

In seeking to unpack that previous statement, I would say that God has kindly led us on a journey of discovery around the topic of the “mission of God” and the “mission of His Church”. God has helped us see from Scripture what his heart for the nations really is, the role that the Church plays in that, and subsequently, the role missions organisations have in contributing to the mission of God.

When my wife Leanne and I joined Wycliffe more than 30 years ago, I naively saw the translated Bible as the end goal. There was a certain appeal around that goal too. It was finite; it was a tangible goal to reach. However, we slowly discovered that this was not the end or ultimate goal. **The goal is to see transformed lives and transformed communities worshipping God.** This is, after all, what the mission of God comes down to; Jesus’ final instruction wasn’t to ‘make my word accessible to all nations’, but to ‘make disciples of all nations’.

Making disciples means to teach and impart a way of life for others to follow. Therefore, the translated Bible (and not just the New Testament) is a vital and imperative means to reaching the ultimate goal, as it contains valuable

instruction. However, much of the work that transforms lives happens throughout the journey of Bible translation, and is carried on long after translation is complete.

More recently I have thought about this in the context of our theme of sailboat versus powerboat. Whether you use a sailboat or a powerboat, you normally have a destination in mind. However, with a powerboat, you would typically go in a straight line, or at least chart the shortest distance to reach your destination the fastest. Meanwhile, a sailboat requires using the sails to capture and harness the power of the wind, charting a course that takes you in different directions in order to most effectively capture the force of the wind to gain the most momentum.

So why do we still use sailboats? If your main goal was to get to a destination, you would choose to go on a powerboat. However, if your goal is to get somewhere while also developing memories and relationships which can be built on after reaching the destination, you would go sailing. **Likewise, if the end goal of our mission is to have lasting impacts beyond completing a translated Bible, the best way for us to do that is by ‘sailing’.**

What I love about this analogy is that when we are reliant on the power of the wind, which is the power of God’s spirit, we are dependent upon God. This means we have a role to play in order to make the necessary adjustments and the trimming of the sails. The journey then takes on another dimension and the journey itself can have as much relevance as the destination.

The various ways in which we trim the sails – socio-linguistic survey, orthography development, literacy programs, Scripture Engagement programs, oral Bible storytelling workshops, multi-media formats – all contribute to this journey, or navigating the journey in accordance with the direction and force of the wind.

These all have an impact on the lives and communities of the people we are called to translate the Word of God for. They also contribute to the ultimate goal of transformed lives and communities who are worshipping God.

What a privilege it is to be on this journey, and being part of a crew that is adjusting and trimming the sails, in order to enable the sailboat to have the momentum it needs to ultimately reach its destination, even if it is not necessarily in a straight line.

# God is Moving

Excerpt from Walking in God's Footprints

Walking in God's Footprints tells the story of Christine Furby, a Wycliffe New Zealand member who, together with her husband Ted, embarked on a journey to translate the Bible into the Garrwa language in Northern Territory, Australia. This inspiring book follows Christine's life from her first sense of call to missions and the way she entrusted her life to the Lord, all the way through to the miraculous impacts of the translated Scripture in the Garrwa community. Underlying it all is her testimony to God's goodness, faithfulness, and power to change lives.

In the following excerpt, Christine and Ted had already settled into life and language-learning amongst the Garrwa people, and were beginning to translate Scripture. Christine shares from their perspective of expectantly praying and waiting for God to move in the hearts of the Garrwa people. Christine had faith that, since they had been clearly led to work with the Garrwa community, the Lord "had a plan to bring them into the saving knowledge of Himself". She tells of how the pastor to the Garrwa language group had the same faith when he said "While we wait for the Bible in our own languages, God can speak first through His Spirit".

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*Wallaby Roy, who was married to Lena, was a man we thought we knew. Yet hidden in his past were some secrets he had never shared with us. When they finally came out, we were amazed.*

*He remembered when the first missionary, Mr Pattemore, came to the area. He taught a class of twenty to thirty men how to read English. At that time Roy was working, so he missed the opportunity to become literate in English. However, some time later another missionary, Mr Main, came and shared the Gospel with the men at the stock camp where Roy worked and gave him a Bible. Although he couldn't read it, a fellow worker at the stock yard started to teach him how to read. Roy learnt to read the easy words, but he couldn't understand the Bible—it was too difficult, although he believed the words about God were all true.*

*Despite not having access to the Bible in a language he could understand, God was at work in Roy's life. He recalled how he saw God answer his*

*prayers. "When I was out mustering, I used to chase wild bullocks in the bush. And I used to pray and then the cattle would just walk quietly back to the camp. I used to drive big mobs of cattle after praying to God. The other fellows didn't bring many cattle in—they had trouble with the wild ones—but I used to bring many after prayer to God."*

*[Roy] continued mustering, but his alcohol consumption became excessive and he would often feel quite sick... However, amongst his few possessions was his Bible, and, whenever Roy felt unwell, he would remember to pray.*

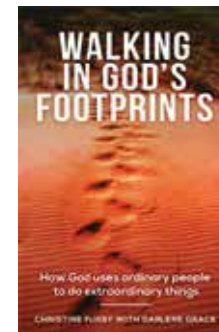
*One night after supper while he was feeling sick, Roy saw a very bright, yellow star... Roy recalled, "I went to sleep and in a dream I looked up and saw Jesus coming down..."*

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Roy goes on to detail an encounter with God that changed his life, before he had ever understood the Bible in his own language!

This is just one story of many where the spirit of God moves in lives and hearts, preparing them for His Word to take root. God is preparing hearts for his Word to be received, while also calling others to go make His Word available in their language. We just need to be receptive to His movement, adjust our sails, and trust Him as he takes us where he is leading.

- To read the rest of his encounter, and many other incredible stories from Christine and Ted's life, you can purchase a copy of *Walking in God's Footprints* by contacting [info@wycliffenz.org](mailto:info@wycliffenz.org) (\$20 + postage).



# The Wind in our Sails

BY DARLENE FARROW

*“A man’s heart plans his way,  
but the Lord directs his steps.”*

Proverbs 16:9

My husband, Craig, and I both felt called by the Lord to work in Bible translation with Wycliffe before we had met each other. Yet, it wasn’t until five years after we were married that He directed us to pursue linguistic study and prepare for the mission field. We had often wondered during those five years if God had changed His mind or had forgotten about us. Or perhaps we had lost the ability to hear His voice? It was like being in a yacht with no wind. A time of rest and local ministry. At that time, a missionary friend reassured us, “When God calls you to pursue the next steps, you’ll know.” How true those words were! Just when I started to get comfortable, the Lord stirred up the wind and we knew it was time to prepare for the work He had called us to.

**When we looked back on those five years of waiting, we saw that they weren’t wasted but were valuable years of local ministry and preparation for what lay ahead of us.** As we “sailed” out to the land He called us to, we had such a strong sense of the Lord’s presence and leading. We knew we were exactly where He wanted us. It didn’t matter what the environment was like,

*He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”  
(2 Corinthians 12:9a, NIV)*

We thought we would spend our years until retirement in that field, serving the Lord. But after 13 years, the wind suddenly changed. It caught us by surprise. The Lord directed us to “sail” back to New Zealand. For the last four years we have served the Lord in remote roles. The work has continued, just the location changed and our oldest three sons grew up and left the nest!

We thought we would be in New Zealand until our daughters finished their schooling—another six years. But a fresh breeze caught our “sails” and we heard Him calling us in a new direction—to a completely different location. Again, it took us by surprise!

In Proverbs 16:9 it says, **“A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”** (NKJV) Over and over again we see that God’s timing is so different from ours. But what a privilege it is for each one of us to follow and obey the Holy Spirit’s leading and guiding.

Where might the wind of God’s Spirit be leading you? Perhaps He is calling you in a new direction? Please get in touch with us if you would like to explore where the Lord would have you in His mission field. There are more than 1400 field-based roles with our strategic partner SIL and other partners. For those not able to venture far from home, there are over 400 roles that can be done remotely.

● For more information, please contact [inquiries@wycliffenz.org](mailto:inquiries@wycliffenz.org)

# Set Sail for a Journey of Relationships

BY MARIETTA FLAWS



*Jesus' ministry was built through relationships, and in Bible translation, it's no different.*



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*The tension we felt between our Western task-orientation and the Kanak value on relationships was always present.*

Jesus' ministry was built through relationships, and in Bible translation, it's no different. But this can be a struggle for task-oriented Western missionaries, whose upbringing has taught them that productivity is of utmost importance. **It takes a mental shift to value just being with people.**

When an expat advisor team moved to the Paicî language area in New Caledonia in 1986, they built relationships that led to the local churches catching a vision for Bible translation and setting up translation teams. It was a huge blow to the people and to the project when the advisors' visas weren't renewed.

We were sent to the Paicî area to enable the project to continue. When we arrived in New Caledonia in 1990 and moved to a Paicî village in 1991, we were very aware that we needed to nurture the relationships that had been developed. But the people were still feeling the loss of the first advisors and seemed reluctant to invest in new

relationships and working partnerships that might again be taken from them.

**Gradually, as we took part in community life and worked together, and the people began to believe we were in it for the long haul, we were able to build relationships:** relationships with our village host family, who so generously offered to have us live with them; with the local pastor, deacon, village congregation and other senior ministers and parishes at regional events; with village leaders like the chief and the president of the village council of elders; with the Paicî translators in different villages. The tension we felt between our Western task-orientation and the Kanak value on relationships was always present.

Relationships built in one of the key translation villages enabled another Kiwi family to move there for three years and develop reading materials in Paicî, authored by Jacques Pourouda, a local primary school teacher and Bible translator. **Jacques had become an invaluable friend and cultural**



Cemuhi translators and the Flaws with the Cemuhi New Testament.  
Photo credit Tim Taylor

**advisor to us, and through his kinship ties and longstanding relationships, he was able to set up another expat family as translation advisors in the neighbouring language of Cemuhi.**

Jacques called on us when the expat advisors left after three years, and on behalf of the Cemuhi translation team, asked for our help. So we developed relationships with the Cemuhi translators, and soon noticed their humility and commitment to the project. Their hard work and persistence paid off, and in 2018 the Cemuhi New Testament was dedicated.

A few years earlier, we'd attended a Wycliffe Bible Storytelling workshop for local Pacific churches in Auckland. In God's providence (and all due to relationships!), the host church had a Kanak youth pastor who was able to participate, along with his good friend from Noumea. These two young men went on to lead a series of Bible Storytelling workshops in New Caledonia.

A Kanak woman who took part in the workshops in New Caledonia felt called to help the leaders however she could. She felt a pull to translate God's word into her language, and her husband was a great support. We were so impressed with their dedication that we made a trip to New Caledonia to give them some initial translation training. **Despite COVID-19 setbacks, a group from this language, Hmwaveke, is translating Luke's Gospel and Marietta is helping them from Wellington.**

Ian is continuing his partnership with Jacques, consulting with him about grammar questions relevant to documenting the structure of the Paicî language. They hope to use the data later to collaborate on Paicî teaching materials.

In cross-cultural mission, as in sailing, it's more about the journey than the destination.



# Sailing Away from the Shore

BY GREG BLOK

*Most adventures lie beyond  
the safety of our couch, and we  
must be willing to give up some  
comfort to experience them.*

I have a favourite poster up on a wall in our village house that shows one of the majestic old sailing ships sailing through a storm. It has a caption that reads: **“One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.”** This poster expresses the spirit of adventure that I’ve always enjoyed and is almost a theme in my life. At the same time it also captures something of the truth that most adventures lie beyond the safety of our couch, and we must be willing to give up some comfort to experience them.

We joined Wycliffe because one day in 1998 I ‘just happened’ to drive past the Auckland office and saw the ‘Wycliffe Bible Translators’ sign and was curious. So I stopped in to ask what they did and the rest, as they say, is history! We ended up in Thailand, directed there by a similar small puff of the wind of the Spirit. After joining Wycliffe, we travelled around NZ promoting Bible Translation for 3 or 4 years, but we were still not sure what country God would lead us to. Rosie had been to Africa once with a short term mission trip and would have been happy to return there. I had heard some Wycliffe missionaries talk about serving in the Pacific on idyllic tropical islands, and could see myself out there, catching fish every other day and enjoying the laid back work ethic of the Polynesians. Then one day we were at the Wycliffe office eagerly listening as colleagues shared about their work in Thailand with refugees from a neighbouring country. The husband also taught at a local university in Chiang Mai. **The presentation touched us both (for very different reasons) and afterwards we were really excited to talk to each other and look into the possibility of working in South East Asia.** Funny how little it takes isn’t it? The old adage springs to mind, ‘You can’t steer a parked car,’ or should we say the opposite – ‘it’s easy to steer a moving vehicle.’

One final story! In 2016 when we were feeling very tired and spiritually dry, I was looking out from our village house and pondering how we could get away and spend some time seeking the Lord and being refreshed. I saw a localised downpour of rain out in the valley and heard the still small voice of the Spirit say to me, “If you want to get wet, go where it’s raining.” Well I took that seriously and the Spirit led us to a retreat in the Philippines. The people hosting the retreat were into prophetic artwork and they had painted a different picture for each of those attending (before ever meeting us). The picture they gave me was of a sailing ship sailing away from the shore! Can you believe that? I was blown away! **And on the back of the painting was something similar to the poem on my poster, but with the added part, “Let the Spirit be the wind in your sails.”**

Isn’t being led by God wonderful? Now that is not to say it’s all plain sailing! Far from it. We have faced many storms along the way. But these are easier to navigate when we know that He is leading us and will never forsake us.

What adventure is God nudging you to take? Go on. Sail away from the comfort of your safe life and into the adventure of being led by the Holy Spirit!

# We believe in universal access to God's Word

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