

# Living Words

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All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.



In the last *Living Words*, we looked at the first part of Wycliffe's three-fold mandate – 'To bless the body of Christ'. This edition, we move on to 'Empower the Bible translation movement'. For us, empowering looks like promoting, equipping and enabling those involved in making God's Word available. As you'll see from the stories to follow, this has taken on many forms – from software development to songwriting to teaching.

In 1 Corinthians Paul talks about "doing everything I can to save some" and Revelation 7 paints a magnificent image of people from every language worshipping God in Heaven. However, in Romans 10 is a challenge to us – "How can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent?"

**This work of bringing God's Word to all people is a team effort – we need each other. We need each other's support, our uniquely diverse gifts and skills, and our response to the call of God to make His name known throughout the earth.**

Following God's call is an adventure, sometimes taking us on unexpected paths. But what a blessing to be part of what God is doing around the world. We are seeing people grow in their relationship with their Heavenly Father, and seeing His Spirit transform them and their community.

We hope that you are greatly encouraged by these stories. Thank you for partnering with us to make God's Word accessible to all people – particularly those who do not have Bibles in their language yet.

Sincerely yours,

**Robert Lovatt**  
Executive Director

## The missing piece in Vanuatu's Bible translation puzzle

BY ROBERT LOVATT

With 110 languages and a total population of just 250,000 people, Vanuatu is the nation with more languages per person in the world. It even beats out Papua New Guinea, which at 840 languages, has the largest number of languages. Vanuatu's official national languages are English, French and Bislama, and this presents us, as translators, with an enormous challenge.

Having served in Vanuatu for close to seven years, I have gained a unique on-the-ground perspective of this challenge. **What is exciting is that it's become clear that the crucial piece in the Bible translation puzzle is the Church in Vanuatu itself.** While there is a strategic role that we can play as an expatriate organisation in training, facilitating and consulting, empowering the national church to take up the challenge is the needed next step.

Wycliffe NZ is partnering with Vanuatu Bible Translators, the national Bible translation organisation, to support



them in engaging the national church. We will be doing this by offering the Kairos course, mission education and training courses, promotional materials, advocating for them, and promoting Vanuatu's Bible translation needs here in New Zealand.

We are also collaborating with one of Vanuatu's most gifted Gospel singers, Vanessa Quai. She has written a song specifically for the church and the people of Vanuatu, putting into language and music the vital message of the power of God's Word.

We're thrilled about this and about the opportunity to come alongside Vanuatu Bible Translators to see the people of Vanuatu getting access to God's Word in their own language.

● If you would like to purchase Vanessa Quai's latest album, *Light It Up*, please contact our office. Each album is \$20 and all proceeds will go to supporting Vanuatu Bible Translators.

# Going home

KEVIN SALISBURY



## **“I want to go Home,” declared Papa Melota on his 80th birthday in January 2019.**

After an absence of 40 years, he wanted to pay a last visit to Wale (‘Home’), as the people of Pukapuka call their island. After months of waiting for news of a boat, he and his family flew to Rarotonga (Cook Islands), loaded their goods onto a cargo boat and sailed 1300km to the northwest, taking five days. Accompanying Melota was his son Mailalo, daughter-in-law Yii (pronounced “Thee”) and their children.



Mailalo (left rear) and Melota (2nd from right) with leaders of Pukapuka

Since 2006 Mailalo has coordinated the Pukapuka Bible translation project based in Auckland. He has completed a Certificate in Biblical Studies and is a preaching elder at Massey Presbyterian Church. He joined Wycliffe NZ in 2014 to enable greater prayer support and encouragement. He continues to work with Kevin and Mary Salisbury in editing and polishing the translation of the New Testament. His father Melota has drafted many OT books.

Last year on Pukapuka, Mailalo held a series of workshops to review Key Terms and get community feedback on the NT translation. Currently he is completing a final read through of the NT, liaising with the chiefly council, ministers and elders, and fostering Scripture Use among the three denominations.

In early October three versions of Ruth in full colour will be launched on the island, designed for early readers, older children and adults. We pray that everyone will be greatly impacted by this high quality literature in the vernacular, and that final approval for publication of the New Testament will result.

Please join us in praying that their dream of having the NT will be realised next year.

# Empowering Bible Translation

BY MARIETTA FLAWS

**Empowering Bible translation can take many forms.** Our main roles have been as trainers, and as translation advisors in New Caledonia, but a few unexpected roles have popped up along the way.

Teaching Phonetics and Language Learning was often a regular feature of our year when the 6-week Language and Culture Course was run in New Zealand. It was inspiring to hear how God had called ordinary people to extraordinary places, and to know that what we were teaching would be helping people as they served God right around the globe.

When the need arose, we did a stint at child care, and even, we're told, cooked for a Guest Weekend! Ian's favourite extra role was zipping around on the

ride-on mower. He later spent three months at the Wycliffe Australia centre as part of a team painting new staff accommodation, while I did library cataloguing and helped with the Literacy class.

In 1987, we headed to Papua New Guinea for a 3-month field orientation course and ended up staying 18 months, with several sessions on staff. We were Tok Pisin language learning facilitators and (rather grandly) Academic Coordinator, but other roles got thrown in, like teaching swimming and use of Coleman lanterns, hiking around a volcanic island to visit students and driving people in a truck over hairy roads!

Once we'd got to New Caledonia in 1990, we gradually settled into our role

as translation advisors, working with speakers of Paicî, one of the 28 Kanak languages. It was a long haul, but eventually the Paicî New Testament was published, in 2012.

A few years prior, a translation project had begun in the neighbouring Cemuhi language. When the job of translation advisor became vacant, our friend and key Paicî translator Jacques stepped in. We were encouraged that all his years of work discussing and

working on the Paicî translation was such good preparation for his new role. In fact, Jacques filled many roles, from Bible teacher to pastor to fill-in cook. He made sure everyone felt part of the team, whether they were a visiting consultant or a local person fetching firewood for the cooks. We hadn't planned to be fully involved in two translation projects, but God knew better, and we were blessed to be part of the project through to its completion in 2018. Both these

projects stimulated an interest in Bible translation amongst other Kanak language groups.

A few years ago, Oral Bible Storytelling was launched in New

Caledonia. Several workshops have been run, with speakers from a number of Kanak language groups. We've had the privilege of attending two of these and **seeing the impact God stories can have when told in someone's**

**own language.** People have been empowered to use their own language to translate Bible stories orally and to share them with others who speak their language.

Maybe there's a role you could fill. What do you have at your disposal? Time, energy, money, interests, skills, a home, property, contacts, ideas?

**Prayerfully consider how you could use what you have to empower Bible translation. Be creative!**

*"It was inspiring to hear how God had called ordinary people to extraordinary places, and to know that what we were teaching would be helping people as they served God right around the globe."*

# Software – God’s tool of empowerment

KATY HOPKINSON



I live with someone who spends hours and hours each day, staring at a computer monitor and typing in a strange language that no one has ever spoken. He is fascinated by his work and can be found there till late at night, working on the software and checking all his tests.

Who do I live with? I live with a software developer. Without him and

the work of many like him, the whole Bible translation movement would be a lot more difficult. So what are these guys doing and how does it contribute to getting the Bible into the hands of minority language speakers around the world. Let me give you a few examples.

The story behind the Yakah Bible is an intriguing one. Many of these people from a restricted-access country,

ended up in refugee camps in South East Asia. They were keen to have the Bible in their own language. Amazingly enough, this clever and innovative group had already developed their own beautiful script 60 years earlier to help preserve their language, culture and identity. However, a new challenge arose – the Catholics amongst them preferred to use the latin script that we use in English.

Furthermore, in the country where they came from, the language was also required to use the national language script. Three different scripts were competing to be in the Bible translation!

The solution? Make three Bibles in the three different scripts! The script team (some very smart software guys) had to create a new font and keyboard for this unique script. It served as a foundation for the three Bibles. The next step involved the developers using software (and plain hard slog) to create the next two Bibles in the other scripts. Can you imagine a Yakah church service? The same scripture reading from any three of these Bibles would sound exactly the same to the listeners but look quite different to the reader.

Another area of work for developers are Smartphones. Most of us have one and they are small, portable and affordable.

We could probably get every version of the English Bible onto them, including audio and video versions. These phones have revolutionised things for indigenous people too, connecting them with Scripture like never before. Our software developers are the ones who adapt the minority language Bibles and other resources to suit the Smartphone using scripts

*“In all these stories, it is an awesome thing to see how God is achieving his purposes. For God’s Kingdom to grow, people need access to the Word and other resources.”*

and languages that Google has never heard of!

And what about my husband, Ira? He is developing tools that enable people who live in different places to collaborate on a translation. Many of these people have limited access to the internet so the plan is to enable them to keep working even when offline. Once online again, their work will update automatically. This feature is still a work in progress.

In all these stories, it is an awesome thing to see how God is achieving his purposes. For God’s Kingdom to grow, people need access to the Word and other resources. Our software developers are empowering translators to get the Word ready *and* get it out to the people.



## Sowing seeds of transformation through song

With songs like *True Harmony*, *No More*, *Freedom* and *Transformation*, Vanessa Quai and her band *New Breed* presented a beautiful and powerful message to audiences at more than 12 concerts over three weeks in the upper North Island in June and July last year.

Vanessa, often referred to as the ‘Songbird of the Pacific’ enthralled audiences with her beautiful voice and original songs that resonated and impacted thousands of people, many of them Pacific Islanders.

On a tour to the Bay of Plenty over three days, many hundreds of ni-Vanuatu migrant seasonal workers working in the horticultural industry flocked to hear Vanessa and her band. **This was a special moment as these workers got to experience Vanessa’s music and hear this important message of transformation live and in person.**

Vanessa also received very positive feedback as a result of interviews on

Rhema Media and Pacific Media radio stations.

We have firmly concluded that this tour has **provided us with an opportunity to sow seeds into the lives of thousands of young and older people alike, about the transforming power of God and His Word.**

Through this tour we were also able to share the challenge of Bible translation in the country of Vanuatu and how important the translated Word of God is to seeing the transformation of lives and communities in Vanuatu. Vanessa and her band are now writing a song about this very theme of the impact of the Bible in the heart language for the peoples and churches of Vanuatu.

Please pray with us that through the seeds that have been sown, God will prepare a harvest of transformed lives both here in New Zealand, and over time, also in Vanuatu.



## Sharing God’s Word through stories

Storytelling has made it possible for so many people to share God’s Word in a way that is accessible and approachable – both here in New Zealand and overseas.

Earlier this year, we were delighted to welcome Liz Blaine to the team as our newest Bible Storytelling (BST) Coordinator. Liz and her family call the beautiful Whangaparaoa Peninsula home and she joins our team having previously been a BST participant and facilitator.

*“I love how Bible stories touch people’s hearts and bring change to their lives. They’re a great tool for sharing God’s truth and facilitating effective Bible studies.”*

Plans for future workshops are now under way and Liz is excited about how the ministry can grow through some innovative ideas.

- If you or someone you know would like to be part of a workshop, or if your church would like to host one, please get in touch with us.

# We believe in universal access to God's Word

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