



# they will See and Understand

ISAIAH 52:15; ROMANS 15:21

## FALL 2017 - RAINY SEASON IN SIERRA LEONE

It's the peak of rainy season in Makeni. Read below to join us on a recent day at our house filled with ministry efforts, construction, homeschooling and playing, and lots of excitement around the anticipation of baby GIRL!



Rains & Neighborhood Mosque

## SPEND A DAY WITH US...

BY RUTHIE WAGNER

We woke to the sound of rain on the tin roof of our home in Makeni, northern Sierra Leone. The rains began weeks ago, but now they are heavy, often down-pouring multiple times a day. The before and after breezes are a sweet—or I should say, sweat—relief from the heat we experience all year. For many, it's the best time of year, but not without challenges of leaky roofs, line-drying clothes, and delays while waiting for those walking or taking motorcycles since these are primary modes of transportation here.



The workday starts today at 8 as Josh prepares for a formal meeting to greet the incoming National Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church in Sierra Leone. The Wesleyan and Catholic denominations are the largest here in Makeni and these types of connections are a crucial aspect of Josh's role as Scripture Engagement Advisor. Encouraging awareness and support among local leaders is essential for the success of the Themne Bible translation

project, and these meetings help identify those Josh can train in resource creation and distribution. It is also important to spend time encouraging the use of Themne in teaching, preaching, and Scripture readings in the churches.

I (Ruthie) feed the boys and prepare the family to tackle the day. Nanna Hannah takes over for me at 9 am, when I start work. One of three translators will join me today when the morning downpour breaks. I'm so thankful that the translators, individually and as a team, meet me in my home office off our front veranda. This maximizes my time with the kids and keeps me connected with the needs of our home. ... (next page)

If you are new to Wagner Updates, please introduce yourself to us! Also, please contact us if you have any questions about our ministry, how you can be involved, how you can pray in more detail, or how you can support financially.

## WHO WE ARE



Josh & Ruthie Wagner, serving with LBT in Sierra Leone, working alongside the Themne people in translation and Scripture Use!

Making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. (LBT's Mission)

## TIMELINE

- MAY** Orientation for Amy Formella, new missionary to Mende translation project, Sierra Leone!
- JUN-JULY** Orientation for Amy, and Translation Officer comes to Sierra Leone for training. Elijah's 5<sup>th</sup> BD (6/21), Isaiah's 3<sup>rd</sup> BD (7/9).
- AUG** App-building workshop held by Josh in Makeni; LBT supervisors in Sierra Leone; Ruthie's BD (8/6)
- OCT** Baby GIRL due early October
- MID-2018** Home assignment (furlough) in USA, speaking and support-raising

## TAKE ACTION

- ADVOCATE** by inviting friends to join our "Wagner Updates" group on Facebook! [facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)
- GIVE** to "Wagner Ministry" online or by mailing a check. Please contact us if you'd like to set up automatic giving.
- PRAISE** for healthy pregnancy, for ongoing translation and Scripture engagement efforts, and for Amy who has joined the Mende translation project in Bo, 3 hours south from us.
- PRAY** for the 3rd trimester and delivery for Ruthie and baby, for good health for us all and Nanna Hannah, for Amy's adjustment to Sierra Leone, and for the Themne translation team and Scripture Use efforts.

## CONTACT/SUPPORT

- ✉ [Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org](mailto:Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org)
- 📘 [facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)
- 📞 **GOOGLE VOICE:** 612.208.7680 (text anytime!)
- 🏠 LBT will forward "Wagner" mail to us.



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RECURRING SUPPORT

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

100%

Translator Thomas works on 1 Samuel in Themne—running basic checks in Paratext (Bible translation software), checking consistency of key terms and spellings, etc. I train and advise him technically and answer periodic questions about word meanings and usage. While he is busy, I use a Themne-specific keyboard to input the book of Isaiah into Paratext. It was re-drafted completely by hand, so it's tedious work to do the entry. One of the translators will need to spend many weeks checking and editing again before we check it as a team. Thankfully, the months of tedious inputting are coming to an end, because the translators are now typing their drafts and corrections directly into the software. I've worked hard to train them, and they are now using it efficiently, not just for drafting, revising, and inputting, but also checking!

As Thomas and I type, click, and discuss, hour after hour, the nearby mosques go through their daily prayers. But since today is Friday, there is also preaching (in English, Krio, and Themne), often for hours on the loudspeakers that you



can see in the earlier picture of our street. We all hear it in every part of our house. This is normal. However, the tone of today's preaching isn't normal. It is harsh, reprimanding, bold, and demanding. "He must be a guest," Thomas says of the preacher. Thomas is surprised at the man's tone, and uncomfortably explains

to me what I don't understand. Sierra Leone is very tolerant, and the preaching we hear would be disturbing to many who value this tolerance. These "guests" periodically rotate through the mosques to encourage people to be more devout. The effects of their preaching are visibly seen in the changes in people's clothing and their frequency in visiting the mosque. We expect to hear these guests and their preaching, but today is different. *Today is a day to grieve.*

Today, we hear unusually strong preaching against Christianity. We hear the voice announcing that the Sierra Leonean president is going to hell unless he confesses Islam. We hear the Imam urging people to be more devout, to pray faithfully, to not allow children to leave Islam or they should be banished. We hear the urge to convert others' children and not to practice the ways of Christians. They pause the preaching to hear the formal conversion of a Reverend to Islam. *Heartbreaking.* We hear his name changed from Paul to Mohammed. They call for his head to be shaved and offerings are taken to support him little-by-little as he comes to mosque.

I feel torn between listening—trying to understand the impact of this on us and our neighbors—and typing as fast as I can. This translation of the Bible into Themne must be done. It's time to shift the balance of Islam and Christianity in this predominately Muslim neighborhood and people group. Interestingly, the Quran calls Jesus the "Word of God" and the "Messiah." May we continually be reminded of this battle against the enemy and of our great Savior who calls all to himself. May we tirelessly press on until the end, until the Word of God is made known in this place.



*Please join us in fervent prayer for this place and this people. May they be claimed for Himself, become a light in this dark place, and become an example of God's mercy and power in West Africa.*

The rest of the day seems mundane after this reminder of eternity. Construction of a back building to expand our living spaces continues. The children continue to thrive under the care of Nanna Hannah.



They swim, they learn, they play. Our precious baby GIRL continues to grow visibly inside of me. Josh ends the day visiting with our security guard and installing a roof rack on our vehicle—the space inside the vehicle

is shrinking quickly. I end the day canning some pineapple jam and making yogurt... and like most evenings, kissing my precious boys goodnight and watching our newest try to kick her way out of my belly. Life is wonderful.

*Thank you, Team, for joining us in the sweet moments and in the battle. We are counting on you.*

♥ Josh & Ruthie Wagner

*Elijah (5yo), Isaiah (3yo), Josiah (1.5yo), & Baby Girl*