

The Nehemiah 8:12 Project

Serving with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Australia's Top End

Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them. [Neh 8:12]

PEV snapshot

Since my last update, I've been steadily drafting more chapters of Genesis for the PEV, and enjoying getting absorbed in the life stories of Abraham and his family. It's quite a ride!

Old Testament narratives often allude to cultural beliefs and practices that were familiar to the original readers, but make little sense to a modern audience. Part of my job is to research these contextual details so that we can clarify and explain them as part of the PEV text. This can take a while, and a lot of reading!

Some of the recent questions I've investigated include:

- Why did Abraham instruct his servant to 'put your hand under my thigh' when making an oath (Gen 24:2)?
- What did Jacob's wedding ceremony look like? Specifically, why did it take him until the morning after to realise he had married the wrong sister (Gen 29:25)?
- Was Jacob's stock-breeding program (Gen 30:37-42) an example of folklorish superstition, or intelligent (if primitive) genetic science?



PEV Mini-Bible

We are due for an exciting milestone in the Plain English Version (PEV) Bible translation project. For the first time since the project's inception over 12 years ago, the completed sections of the PEV—around 70 per cent of the New Testament, plus some short excerpts of the Old—are being published as a single volume, or 'Mini-Bible'. While the existing PEV texts are already well-used in booklet and online format, we hope and pray that even more Indigenous Christians, churches and communities will be drawn to read and teach from the PEV when it finally 'looks like' a Bible!

Some of the organisations and groups that currently use the PEV include Nungalinya Bible College in Darwin (*above*); Aboriginal church gatherings in New South Wales, Central and South Australia; Prison Fellowship; and the annual Katherine Christian Convention. In addition, we're delighted that a number of Aboriginal translators are now using the PEV as a 'base text' for their own Bible translation projects.

Please pray for all to run smoothly in the last stages of production for the Mini-Bible, and for the continued reach and impact of the PEV in this new format.



COVID-zero (almost)

As COVID infections sadly ramp up around Australia, people often comment that it's little short of a miracle the virus has not yet made inroads into the Northern Territory. So far this year there have been just two brief scares in Darwin and surrounds, with the resultant lockdowns lasting less than a week each. Those of us living here are thankful for our freedoms, but even more so for the way God has mercifully shielded vulnerable Indigenous communities from the pandemic. Yet everyone knows there is no room for complacency. **Please pray for Territorians as the threat of Delta looms large.**

AuSIL 60th: update

Due to the current lockdown in Sydney, we have had to transfer the first of our AuSIL 60th anniversary events online. Do please join us via Zoom (whether from Sydney or elsewhere) on **Sat 11 Sept at 2pm AEST**. There will be short presentations from a range of AuSIL staff past and present, plus a chance to ask questions and chat. Come and be encouraged by stories of God's work among Indigenous language communities. Please register at ausil.org.au/events for a Zoom link.

Mawng

In the last week of August, my colleague Kathy and I took a break from our regular work to visit South Goulburn Island, a small outpost of Arnhem Land situated 300km north-east of Darwin in the Arafura Sea. The main language of the island, Mawng, has about 400 speakers and just a few portions of Scripture translated, including Mark's Gospel and a number of Old Testament stories. As a small language, Mawng is evolving rapidly, and its existing Scripture resources are in need of updating to make them understandable—to say nothing of the vast amounts of the Bible that have not yet been touched.

We spent an encouraging few days working with seasoned translators Rosemary, Nancy and Sandra (*below, with one of her granddaughters*), helping them revise the traditional wording of the Lord's Prayer and the Grace into more contemporary Mawng. The ladies are excited to paint these prayers onto canvas and hang them in the local church, so that more people in the community can engage with God's word in their heart language. In the long run they would love to work on Bible translation full-time, but to do so they will need both financial assistance and the ongoing support of a linguist or exegetical adviser. **Please pray that God will provide!**

