



Bringing the Written Word to the World

CONTENTS

First WELS.NET Chat in Spanish!

Bible Storying in Far West Nepal-The Second Workshop

WELS Pastors to Preach in Europe and South America At Virtually No Cost!

No More Fear

"Do You Understand What You Are Reading?"

ISSUE NUMBER 44

JUNE, 2007

A quarterly newsletter distributed by Multi-Language Publications of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Editor

Rev. Paul Hartman
<paulhartman@mlpwels.com>

Layout Assistant

Michele Pfeifer

Multi-Language Publications

2500 George Dieter Drive
El Paso, TX 79936
Phone: (915) 857-5852
1-800-876-1388
Fax: (915) 857-7644
Email: orders@mlpstore.com

At least fifty-one people from four countries and Puerto Rico participated on April 24 in the first chat conducted in a foreign language on wels.net. The language was Spanish. Half of the participants lived in, or came from Latin American countries. The other half included missionaries, pastors and other church workers engaged in outreach to the Latino population in the United States and south of the border. Participants from the USA hailed from at least eleven different states.

The lively and enthusiastic discussion centered on the development of a virtual church for isolated Confessional Lutherans who speak Spanish, the *Lutheran Messenger* and a new Bible correspondence program. The correspondence program is already reaching as many as 700 people in just three months, and it has already led to Bible studies and two on-line worship services for two families in Paris, France and Sevilla, Spain. The *Lutheran Messenger* is the bimonthly publication of the WELS written by and for Hispanic Lutherans. More than 1,700 copies are distributed every two months to churches and individuals who live throughout the Western Hemisphere, from Anchorage, Alaska to Santiago, Chile. Copies are now going to Europe also. The Messenger can be viewed online at the WELS website for Hispanic ministry: www.cristopalabra.com.

The enthusiastic response to the April 24th chat demonstrates again a reality for a significant part of the Hispanic population: it has been uprooted and become isolated from family and friends. The internet, correspondence programs and periodicals are tools the Lord has given us to reach this population, to build among them a sense of fellowship and to incorporate them into our congregations wherever possible.

A follow-up chat is planned by Multi-Language Publications on August 21 at 8:00 PM Central Daylight Time. The participants from the first chat would like to discuss ways to help young people stay close to their Savior.

The chat was promoted and led by Mr. Gonzalo Delgadillo, who is the Spanish publications director at Multi-Language Publications. The webmaster at the WELS Technology Office, Julie Duran, provided technical support. We thank them for their outstanding efforts!



Bible Storying in Far West Nepal - The Second Workshop

By James Brandt, Administrator for the Commission on Parish Schools



I recently had the rare privilege of traveling to the country of Nepal with Pastor Paul Hartman, director of WELS Multi-Language Publications. We delivered the second in a series of Bible workshops designed to strengthen Christian house church leaders' proclamation of the gospel. Our Wisconsin Synod has been providing translated materials to a small group of Nepali Christians who are working hard to share the gospel with the people of their country. Courses that were originally designed for WELS prison ministries are now being used to proclaim Jesus to people around the world.

The directors of the fledgling Nepal mission field and members of our WELS Board for World Missions have committed to "Bible Storying" as an effective way to build up our Nepali brothers and sisters in their faith. Bible Storying has a long history in our synod. We call it Bible History, and our Lutheran elementary school teachers have been using this mission strategy over a hundred years. I was asked to participate in the most recent Bible workshop in Nepal as "the first of many" who may be invited to teach in world missions.

During the ten-day workshop I had opportunity to present 46 Bible Stories in an overview of the Old Testament. What a joy for this administrator to be once again telling Bible stories to a group of eager students! My overriding goal was to equip my students to teach the story of the gospel as presented in the Old Testament when they returned home. To help them visualize the stories and understand when they occurred, I used large illustrations and a twenty-foot timeline. After they had heard me tell the story (through an interpreter), I asked one of the Nepali students to read it aloud from his Bible. I then questioned the students to explore how well they had understood, and continued with an application designed to focus students on the Gospel. Next I placed the students into small groups where one student



would retell the story. It was encouraging to see the members of the groups listening intently and helping one another retell lessons from God's Word. Each session concluded with one individual retelling the story to the entire class of approximately 50 students.

Leaders on our WELS World Missions Board would like to use more teachers in mission settings. Having enjoyed the experience, I look forward to encouraging other teachers to accept similar invitations. The third Nepal Bible workshop will take place this coming October. Mr. Ned Goede, principal at Wisconsin Lutheran High School is slated to be one of the instructors. May God continue to bless our synod's efforts to bring Jesus into the lives of people in Nepal and around the world who live under the spiritual oppression of pagan cultures!

WELS Pastors to Preach in Europe and South America at Virtually No Cost!

By Gonzalo Delgadillo, Director of Spanish Publications

The Spanish Bible Correspondence Program has taken a new turn. Established by the Multi-Language Publications Committee in January of this year, the program aimed to reach out to Latin Americans who do not live in the parish areas served by the churches of our fellowship or who are not yet ready to participate in a congregation. In just five months several thousand copies of the *Bible Teachings Series* have already been distributed.

The gospel is a powerful message. Some of the people who finished the first booklet in the series, *Jesus the Christ*, wanted to study more, but the closest Spanish-speaking church of our fellowship was a hemisphere away. So we began daily Bible studies with a family in Sevilla, Spain at 6:00 pm and with another family in Paris, France at 10:00 pm. Both of these families attended our church in Medellin, Colombia until they moved to Europe about seven years ago.

Then another family in the capital city of Colombia began to study with us on Friday evenings. The family lives too far away to attend our church in that city. Then a woman in Paris and a man in Venezuela joined in. These people in turn are inviting new people in still other places, including Bolivia.

Some of the families asked for worship services. So on Easter Sunday, March 17 we transmitted by internet a service from

the church we attend in El Paso, Christ Our Redeemer. On Sunday, May 13 we began celebrating services regularly with families in Paris and Sevilla in Europe and in Bogotá, Barranquilla, La Asunción and Caracas in South America. None of these families live in the parish area of one of our congregations.

The worship services need pastors of our fellowship who can speak Spanish, have access to the internet and are available at 8:00 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time on Sundays. A quick check in the *WELS Yearbook* revealed about a dozen pastors in the western part of the United States that could help. And they are stepping forward—from Alaska, Washington, California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. Indeed, missionaries in Florida, Wisconsin and Mexico and a national pastor in Colombia have also offered their assistance.

The services require technical expertise, which we have found in abundance from Technology Services in the Synod Administration Building. This is yet another example of how multi-cultural outreach in the United States and around the world depends on the excellent assistance received from Parish Services, the mission offices, Financial Services, Technology Services and Human Resources—to mention just a few of the resources at the Synod Administration Building that help make our outreach efforts more coordinated and effective. With the help of Technology Services a webpage for the services has been created at www.iglesiavirtual.wels.net.

To send resident missionaries to Colombia, France, Spain and Venezuela is out of the question in our synod's current financial circumstances. It would also cost thousands of dollars to have missionaries travel to those countries so that such visits could only be made for very special occasions. But through the Spanish Bible Correspondence Program and the internet, the gospel can be shared in a way we can afford. To date sixteen Spanish-speaking pastors have already volunteered their time to preach. Technology Services is providing technical support. Multi-Language Publications is helping to provide literature. A special offering is covering start-up costs, such as mailing and translation.

“Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.”

If you wish to participate in these ministries or if you know people who would benefit from them, contact us at Multi-Language Publications.

Write us at:

gdelgadillo@mlpwels.com.

Visit our new site at:

www.iglesiavirtual.wels.net.

The availability of pastors who can preach in Spanish illustrates important developments in the WELS: The Hispanic outreach effort in the United States (Cristo Palabra de Vida) has identified seventy-nine pastors who can speak in Spanish. Twenty-six congregations now have Spanish worship services, 20 more congregations are engaged in Hispanic outreach, and another 45 have indicated a desire to begin outreach.

"Do You Understand What You Are Reading?" (Acts 8:30b) How An Annotated Bible Translation Can Help

By Dr. E.R. Wendland, *Lutheran Seminary, Lusaka, ZAMBIA*

This article overviews one aspect of the overall translation program being carried out in the *Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA)* today, under the auspices of the *Education Committee* of each Synod (in Malawi and Zambia).

Biblical literacy

The presence of an idiomatic, even eloquent, Bible translation is no guarantee that people will correctly comprehend the text that they happen to be reading (or hearing). All too often, many are compelled to exclaim along with the Ethiopian seeker, "What does this passage of Scripture really mean?" (Acts 8:34). Indeed, the words may all be familiar, each on its own, but when put together within the verse at hand, the intended sense is not readily apparent, or there may be no meaning at all, or some foreign idea may be imported into the text. Although many modern English translations still unreservedly claim (in a Preface) to be "clearly understood" or "fully intelligible" to all their users, actual results are often rather far from this ideal. The translated text on its own cannot always guarantee either a correct or a complete understanding of any given passage, certainly not throughout a given book, or even a familiar pericope such as the one about the African emissary and the evangelist Philip. This is not to deny the general clarity, or *perspicuity*, of the Scriptures. But it may just be that many people know rather less about the full sense of the passage at hand than they think they do.

So what is the problem here—are we not living in the so-called "information age" with more potential avenues available and agencies involved in proclaiming the Scriptures throughout the world than ever before? Even the ancient field of Bible translation has been expanding greatly in recent years as new theories and approaches to the task appear on a regular basis. But is genuine *biblical "literacy"*, on the whole, really increasing everywhere on earth? Is the large "conceptual gap" that separates most contemporary text users from the original setting of Scripture decreasing all that much? Perhaps you can venture an answer yourself, based on your own experience. One aspect of this problem has to do with the sheer amount of what is both needed and available in this regard. There is so much background information that one needs to know to really get into the biblical text, and new facts—both reliable (e.g., from the Dead Sea Scrolls) and spurious (e.g., regarding the so-called "gospel of Judas"), seem to emerge almost every day.

But take the average daily Bible reader in action, perhaps someone doing a personal devotion at home, or following along in the text during a public sermon or Scripture study: How many among even these committed disciples are prepared to take the time and make the effort to utilize additional hermeneutical helps (e.g., a Bible commentary or dictionary), whether in print or an electronic computer program (e.g., *Logos*), while they are studying the passage before them? To be sure, the essential background information they require may be readily available, but often they are simply too busy or text-focused to consult any more books or study tools.

Resources at hand

Then, too, one must admit that many modern versions of Scripture are still quite deficient when it comes to providing, along with their translation, crucial *paratextual* (text-parallel) resources. These would include key cross references, explanatory footnotes, a glossary, a basic concordance of important terms, well-composed sectional headings, appropriate illustrations, graphs, charts, maps, and so forth. Some Bibles do not even offer a suitable book introduction, one that deals with crucial subjects such as authorship, date of composition, occasion or purpose for writing, the primary addressees, their sociocultural and historical setting, the main religious topics covered, and/or a general outline of subject matter.

For readers, it would seem that the most efficient and accessible place to offer these additional resources is together with the biblical text (translation) itself. Such contextual aids thus stand, like Philip, right *alongside* the passage that is being read, able to assist the reader to better understand and apply it. Do poor or inexperienced readers actually make use of these tools—for example, are they able to readily locate and correctly interpret footnotes? If not, then of course some appropriate prior instruction is necessary, this being the primary responsibility of our local pastors, teachers, and lay-leaders. Such work would most naturally be undertaken as an essential part of the ministry of caring for fellow members of the Body of Christ (see Acts 18:24-28).



"Do You Understand What You Are Reading?" (continued)

In the LCCA over the years (since the early 1970s), we have been able to take this a step farther, that is, by assisting our two national Bible Societies to produce reliable translations of the Scriptures (5 complete Bibles and 5 additional New Testaments thus far). More recently, we have moved even further ahead in a Scripture-based educational program by spearheading two "Study Bible" projects—the *Chewa* in Malawi and the *Tonga* in Zambia (the latter through the generous support of the WELS *Multi-Language Publication Committee*). And while we are engaged in annotating these translations (both being recent idiomatic-language versions), we also take the opportunity to propose any corrections or text-revisions that seem necessary.

A sample of study notes

To illustrate some of the didactic possibilities here, several examples are cited below (given in translation) from the draft notes for the Chewa study Bible edition of Acts, with reference to the well-known passage of 8:26-40. (Some additional helps for this text would be items such as: a *glossary* entry for the term "eunuch", an *illustration* of a typical "chariot", and a simple *map* of the Palestinian locale being referred to.) First, a brief *introduction* to this portion of Scripture is given beneath its sectional heading:

About Philip and the Ethiopian treasury minister

This story is similar to the one involving the Lord Jesus when he walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-35). In that account, the Lord taught those two men in detail about the Messiah of God promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. Here too, Philip carefully instructs the Ethiopian about the Messiah from the Old Testament, and then leaves him suddenly when the lesson is complete. This story also shows how the Good News continued to spread abroad in many different areas and among different peoples, being advanced by the Holy Spirit working through obedient witnesses.

Here then are a few sample study-application notes concerning selected aspects of this passage:

8:27 **Ethiopia:** This is the land that today is located in southern Sudan. In those days this region was part of the famous African kingdom called Nubia. Indeed, the Good News about Christ was quickly brought to our continent by one of our own missionaries!

—**he had come to Jerusalem to worship:** This man, though undoubtedly both wealthy and important in the government of the Nubian Queen Candace, was also very serious about worshiping the God of Scripture. He strictly followed the religion of the Jews of the Old Testament, like Cornelius did before he was instructed by Peter (*see Acts 10:2, also 2:11*).

8:32-33 This devout man from Africa, though traveling on a long journey, took time to study the Word of God. What a good example he is for us! The passage he was reading is found in the book of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (*Isa. 53:7-8*). It seems as if the Ethiopian was especially interested in the prophecy about the Messiah's suffering and death.

8:35 **The Good News about Jesus from that Scripture:** The words of Isaiah prophesied about Jesus Christ, the called "Servant of God," who was the promised Messiah (*see the related verses in Isa. 52:13-53:12*). Philip probably used many other passages from Isaiah that tell us about Christ the Redeemer (*see 7:14; 9:2-7, 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 61:1-2*).

These diverse, text-oriented tools (and others in the electronic field could have been mentioned) all contribute towards the enhancement of a Bible-based theology in the African vernacular. They also contribute to the development of a more educated laity—mature modern-day Bereans who are better equipped to teach one another and also to reach out to others with the Word of life (cf. Acts 17:10-14, 20:4).

"The Ethiopian...went his way rejoicing."

Why was the Ethiopian royal official so happy after Philip, his personal text expositor, had suddenly been removed from before his very eyes (Acts 8:39b)? Obviously, his joy had a great deal to do with what the Lord's evangelist had recently been telling him—about the Good News of salvation in the promised Messiah, Christ Jesus, a story that had previously been a puzzling mystery for him. Now he had the key to unlock the rest of the Scriptures and a foundation for building additional knowledge that he might learn one day about the divine Servant-Savior who had come to live, suffer, and die for his sins and those of his people. His life had been changed, and there's a good chance that this convert did become, as the Chewa study note has it, the first missionary to an African nation, an activity that would have undoubtedly required some form of vernacular Bible translation. In any case, the point is clear: a certain "critical mass" of understanding is necessary before most people can fully benefit from the revealed words of Scripture. The question is: who and what will God use to provide this essential information?

"Do You Understand What You Are Reading?" (continued)

The LCCA has been engaged in the production of study Bibles from the very beginning of this educational initiative here in Africa. This would appear to be a very sound investment for our church. To be sure, an ongoing expenditure of time, treasure, and talent must be made, but this is always repaid, as figuratively depicted in our Lord's parable, in a most manifold manner (Lk 25:14-23). Such ex-proportionate blessing falls upon all those who are participating in and supporting these Scripture-focused projects. Pastors are thus putting their seminary training to good use and preparing themselves for greater service in the church, whether in their local congregations or at the wider synodical level. Participation in the overall ministry of Bible translation invariably promotes a fuller "ownership" of the Scriptures for all those involved in its production and promotion. These Sacred Writings thus become established as a vital, living reality for men and women who translate or review the text and who, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, also allow it to work on them, enriching their faith and life. In this way the one sure foundation of the Lord's Church at large is reinforced as a solid basis for the ongoing spiritual reinforcement of its theology, ministry, charity, evangelistic outreach, and spiritual edification.



Multi-Language Publications
Bringing the Written Word to the World

Visit us online at:
www.mlpwels.com

No More Fear

Missionary Terry Schultz has developed a story approach to address the fears felt by many people in the Amazonian region of Peru, where people frequently believe that spirits inhabit trees, the rivers and many other elements of their natural world. Recently, Terry turned his story approach into an illustrated booklet.

Entitled *No More Fear*, the booklet has attracted the attention of other evangelical Christians. When he saw the booklet last year, the now sainted Dr. Paul Hiebert noted that the book solves the problem of drawing an evil spirit without it looking silly or stupid, like a little imp or something. Rather, the evil spirit is represented as a teacher



portraying an evil spirit. The professor requested a copy of the booklet for one of his doctoral-level classes plus additional copies for a course he was planning to teach in India. Dr. Hiebert was a professor of mission and anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois until he passed away earlier this year. More recently, Terry reports that Bethany bookstore in Mankato is ready to stock the book. Something I appreciate very much about the book is its clear and emphatic presentation of the gospel—because of Jesus Christ we do not have to fear evil spirits.

If you serve in a developing area of Africa, Latin America and South

Asia—or are engaged in outreach to immigrants from those regions of the world, it is very possible the animist beliefs still infect the people with whom you are sharing the gospel. Consider whether this book might give you a solid approach to the fears that plague your people.



View a sample of *No More Fear* online at: www.mlpwels.com
Then answer our online survey to help develop this publication!