

MULTI-LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS

ISSUE
60

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The Translation Program of
THE LUTHERAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN JAPAN



Rev. Brad Wordell, our WELS missionary to Japan, is working with the church of our fellowship to develop publications in the Japanese language. Recently we interviewed Rev. Wordell about that work.

You are translating the *People's Bible*. This is a huge project—41 volumes! Why did your church choose this project?

The *People's Bible* commentary is a Christ-centered commentary that explains the Bible in a simple, easy-to-understand format. These books help Christians grow in faith and knowledge. They are useful to pastors and lay leaders as they prepare sermons, Bible classes, and Sunday School lessons. The Ethiopian eunuch said to Philip, "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" (Acts 8). The members of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church in Japan (LECC) think that the *People's Bible* is useful for members and prospects.

How does the church hope to make these books available to other Christians in Japan?

The first volume translated and published by the LECC was Genesis. We have distributed copies in our own congregations. Members are reading it on their own, and churches are using it in Bible classes.

We are also giving copies to prospects who express interest, and we are offering them to people on the internet.

Written Japanese is very different from English. Please describe some of those differences. Is it true, for instance, that more than one kind of character is used to write Japanese?

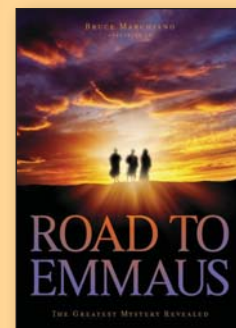
English has a phonetic alphabet of 26 letters. Japanese has thousands of ideograms called kanji, which came from China. In school Japanese students learn "common usage kanji." There are 1945 of them. Besides that there are two phonetic alphabets in Japan. The first one, called hiragana, is a phonetic alphabet of 40 characters. The second set of 40 characters, called katakana, has corresponding pronunciations to hiragana, but the shapes are different. Hiragana looks more rounded, while katakana looks more boxy. The katakana alphabet is used for words that originated outside of Japan. This would also include Bible names and the names of foreigners.

I've seen Japanese written in different directions—from right to left, and vice versa, starting at the "back" of the book and vice versa!

Indeed! When Japanese is written horizontally it is read from left to right (a long time ago it was read from right to left). However, when Japanese is written vertically, it is read from top to bottom, but each page is read from right to left.

But Japanese is also different from other oriental languages like Chinese and Korean. How so?

Kanji characters originally came from China. Even to this day, the meaning of many of the characters can be understood in both China and Japan (although both countries have simplified many of them in different ways). However, the pronunciation of those characters is completely different in each country. Japanese people add hiragana and katakana between the kanji. In Japanese, the same kanji can be read in several different ways depending on its usage. The people of Korea now use a phonetic alphabet, with very little use of kanji.



**Road to Emmaus
Video Now
Available in Urdu**

We just received word that 1,000 DVD's of the Urdu version of the *Road to Emmaus* film were received at the center for the Bible Correspondence Program in Pakistan. The video was dubbed in the national language of Pakistan at a Christian studio in that country.

The center is excited about using this tool to help Christians grow in their understanding of the gospel.

Interview - continued

It's been said that the Japanese people use different kinds of language according to the relationship that exists between the people who are speaking—elderly, children, strangers, family members etc. How do you produce written material in a culture that makes so many distinctions?

While spoken Japanese is quite different for different situations—depending on gender, age, relationship, and level of formality—written Japanese tends to be more uniform. In translating Bible materials, we aim for the same kind of language used in Japanese books and periodicals.

You are not merely translating words, you are translating concepts that may be unheard of to your targeted readers. For instance, we've heard that Japanese does not have a word for "sin". How do you translate a concept like that into Japanese? Are there other examples you might share?

The Japanese have a word for "sin," but it is the same kanji as the word for "crime." Sin is breaking God's law (the Ten Commandments); crime is breaking the laws of the state. Because Japanese society has not been shaped by the Bible, when most Japanese people hear the word "sin" they naturally think about "crime." For that reason, this familiar Bible passage may sound like this to them: "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a criminal'" (Luke 18). Concepts like God, sin, forgiveness, and love require careful and repeated explanation. Only through the Word, and only with the Holy Spirit's help, can the people of this world understand these concepts correctly.

Tomita San is the translator. She has been a part of the Lutheran church for many years and studied in the United States. Please introduce Tomita to our readers.

Tomita san is a member of our congregation in Tsuchiura. She studied at our teacher training college in New Ulm many years ago. After returning to Japan she gave much needed and much appreciated support to the missionaries in Japan. That support included translation help. Tomita san continues to provide the initial translation of the *People's Bible* commentary. Translating at a rate of about 70 pages each month, Tomita san is working on her 27th volume (out of 41). She is currently translating the Matthew volume. Her English comprehension and her theological vocabulary make her ideally suited for this work. We pray she can continue to serve in this way until the whole series is translated.

Revision of translation work is also very important. Various people in the Japan church are doing that work. Tell us about them.

After Tomita san does the original translation, there is a five step process before the manuscript is sent to the Multi-Language Publications Committee. The first step is a general proofread by a lay member. The second step is the English check by a former missionary. The third step is second proofread by a lay member. The fourth step is a theological check by an LECC pastor. The fifth step is layout, which includes making page breaks that are similar to the English volume.



Pictured are: Tomita san (second from left); Pastor Wordell (far right); along with national pastors.

What are they looking for when they revise Tomita's translations?

The members in Japan are checking the manuscript for typos, for correct kanji usage, for possible grammar improvements, for clarity, for uniformity, and for readability.

Former missionaries are also helping with the revision process. Even though Japanese is not their first language, they can help in important ways. How so?

Former missionaries Roger Falk and Kermit Habben compare the Japanese sentences to the English sentences to make sure that Tomita san always understood the English correctly. They also provide some theological editing.

People in other areas of the world often mention how they personally have grown in their faith as they translated the *People's Bible*. Has the Japanese team experienced that also?

Yes, our translation and editing people have said the same thing. Mrs. Tanaka, who recently did the third edit on the Acts volume of the *People's Bible* says, "I studied the Bible for the first time 20 years ago. While I was studying in the lay-training course, Pastor Stahmann asked me if I would be willing to do this editing work. At that time I wondered if a simple housewife like me should be doing such an important job. When I edited Acts I read each paragraph carefully several times and was able to make some improvements. This chance to serve and to grow in my faith is a gracious gift from my Savior, Jesus."

How can the Multi-Language Publications program assist your church in the development of the Japanese edition of the *People's Bible*?

We are thankful to Multi-Language Publications for their financial support, for their interest in promoting the gospel through Japanese publications, and for their loving encouragement. We are also excited about the technological tools that WELS Connect offers. Multi-Language Publications has been and will continue to be a help to us as we learn how to use that technology.

A Better Way to Work Together...

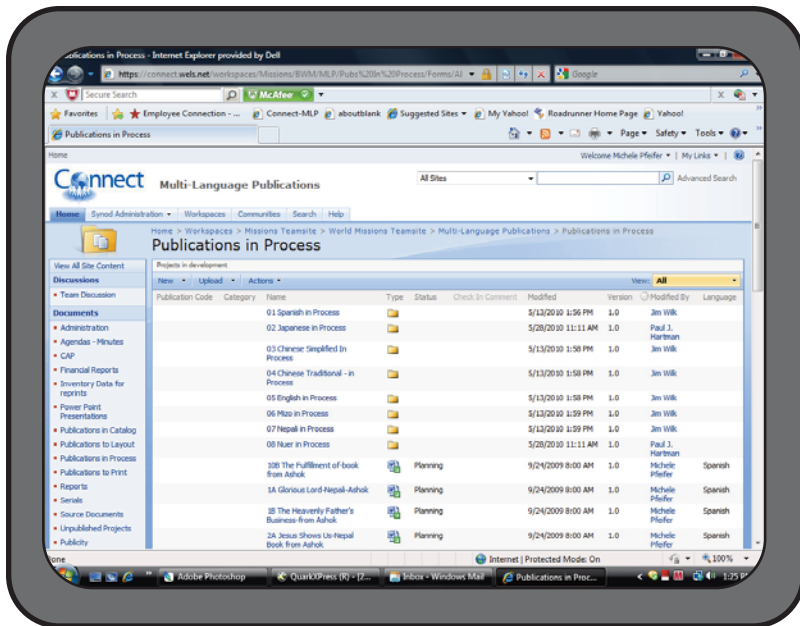
THANK YOU, JIM AND TOM!

Twenty-five years ago when WELS missionaries serving in various Latin American countries would meet at a conference they would discover that different men were working on the same project unaware of what the other was doing. Worse, many projects were started but never really finished. This is a major reason why the Multi-Language Publications program began—first to coordinate Spanish publishing, and now many other languages also. As technology improved, first missionaries and then many other people discovered that they could share files and work together to develop publications. The Spanish edition of the 41-volume *People's Bible* was produced by mailing diskettes from one field to another. People were learning how to work together over long distances, but obstacles remained. Multiple versions of a publication existed in different files. These in turn were often kept in different locations. The file naming system was eclectic. So data became hidden, time was wasted, and sometimes precious data was destroyed.

Technology Services at the Synod Administration Building has created an online system that is helping mission fields bring order out of chaos. Using Microsoft Sharepoint, people like Jim Wilk and Tom Luecke have created a system, called Connect WELS, to help mission fields work together more effectively as teams.

Missionaries, translators and other workers can collaborate on the same document, track changes to a document as it is revised and then brought through the layout process. Other information can be shared online through calendars, announcements, meetings and project management.

This does require old-timers like myself to rethink how we label, store and work with files. The idea of bringing one file through different versions may be old hat to other fields of endeavor, but it is a new concept for many of us who are engaged in world mission publishing. Tom and Jim write, "Connect is browser-based, and while its accessibility and capabilities are numerous, they are a sea-change from the 'flat file' and folder structure to which most users are accustomed. To use Connect's capabilities to their greatest advantage, users needed to completely rethink how they organized their documents and data. This reorganization and the associated data migration was quite challenging for many users. It should be noted, however that once done, users were quite pleased with the way their documents could be located, displayed, shared and selectively secured." Count us among those who found themselves in rocking boats as their "sea changed"! But we are very pleased with the results. If only we could have used this process 20 years ago!



Connect WELS, of course, is not only available for those engaged in cross-cultural publishing. The Ministry of Christian Giving is using the system to track vital demographic and statistical information for WELS congregations. The mission boards are using a process to request funding and requests for help that come from mission fields. The Commission on Lutheran Schools is tracking statistics and other data of vital importance to our parish elementary schools and area Lutheran high schools.

So how did Jim and Tom develop their ability to apply SharePoint to connect the WELS online? Too modest to talk about their education and prior work experience, they simply say, "Most insight and knowledge was gained by 'on the job training,' knowledge transfer from our contracting partner, reading related manuals and article, attending topical *webinars* and 'by doing'." Now that's something cross-cultural publishers can relate to! Most of what we've learned has also been gained through experience, consulting and just doing

it. Thank God who has moved the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ to be patient with us as we learn, make mistakes and learn some more.

And we thank him for the gift he has provided to cross-cultural work through Jim Wilk and Tom Luecke.

We associate mission work with the preaching and teaching done by pastors and others in many places around the world. Behind them stand many people like Jim and Tom who share in that work by providing administrative assistance, technology and many other services at the Synod Administration Building. They also have a role in the gospel ministry of the WELS.



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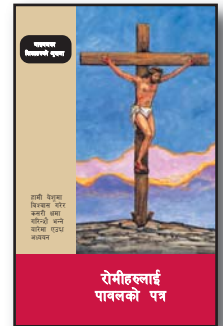
Literature Produced through MLP USED WITH NEPALI REFUGEES IN ST. LOUIS



Peace Center in
St. Louis

Pastor Walter Westphal reports, "The LCMS is ministering at a Peace Center in [St. Louis] to dozens of refugees from Nepal, many of whom have become new Christians prior to their arrival in the US. Their conversion has been attributed to the literature ministry that WELS is conducting in Nepal, and appreciation was expressed for the excellent teaching materials produced by MLP that the Center is using. One Nepalese woman on her first visit to the Center brought along her well-used Bible and hymnal. She has since been baptized at the Center. I hope your reaction to this, like mine, is one of joy that the Lord is blessing this seed-sowing effort on all sides of the globe. It's beyond our capability to follow up on the hundreds of refugees who have had some contact with MLP literature in Nepal and Pakistan, but it's wonderful to hear that God has ways of keeping them in his care."

A primary publication in Nepal that has been distributed by the Scripture Learning Program is the *Bible Teachings Series*. Copies of these books have been sent to Northwestern Publishing House for distribution in the United States.



Bible
Teachings
Series book
in Nepalese

रोमीहरूलाई
पावलको पत्र