

January  
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# Wycliffe Bible Translators



## News from the Rowbory Family serving in Nigeria

One evening after teaching, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” ... A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

*(Mark 4:35-41, NIV)*

As we heard of Jesus calming the storm, I was interested when several Nigerian colleagues wondered whether Jesus had something to do with the storm coming in the first place. I’ve never heard westerners asking that (we might just conclude it was just unfortunate), but perhaps what happened next—as they meet the man with the ‘Legion’ of demons in him—gives us a clue about what was really going on. So Jesus hadn’t conjured up the storm to frighten his disciples, nor was it simply an impersonal natural occurrence.

Jesus’ very presence seemed to rouse all the evil forces to confront him, but his calm authority showed he was really in control and also that he really loved and cared for people. We shouldn’t doubt his care or his power should we?

**Your prayers in October were answered;** we had smooth transport, our bags all arrived successfully, and we received a warm welcome home in Jos, and after two weeks of frantic activity the annual staff conferences opened with the **Mark Drama**. Some weeks later we had recovered towards more normal rhythms of work and homeschool just in time for Christmas.

### **David: Urgent Catchup with Nyankpa and Ashɛ**

As soon as we touched down in Nigeria I had to grapple with various urgent work I’d been neglecting whilst in the UK. After I checked in with the **Ashɛ** team, top priority was wrapping up some overdue consultant check reports for the **Nyankpa** translation from the last year.

Nyankpa language is related to Ishɛ, and the people are neighbours, so quite a lot of the language seems familiar, based on my Ishɛ experience. But it has its own grammatical patterns and sounds, and there are plenty of surprises and ‘false friends’ to keep me on my toes. Around the time we were checking **John’s 3 letters** the team were trying out 2 potential new translators and it’s been a delight over the last year to see how the new younger translator **Lazarus** has been nurtured into his translation role by ever-cheerful **Alaska**, who I’ve known ever since we came to Jos in 2011. They’re a fun team to work with, and quite patient with my foolish questions as I look to see how robust and helpful their translation is.

The portions I checked, 1-3 John and 1-2 Peter, pack a powerful punch urging and helping Christians keep on track, but along the way there are some **tricky areas** and much scope for getting all the words but scrambling the meaning. The Greek words that are translated into English often as ‘word’ and ‘spirit’ need great care as there are several possible options and what seems right at first glance may be very misleading. We could easily despair but we often are privileged to see the translators developing in their own understanding of God and his gospel and we hear stories of how others in their communities have gained a much clearer grasp of the gospel through the carefully translated scriptures.

I was interested to discover that the kind of harmful behaviour caused by evil spirits is known in Nyankpa as '**elang ogbak obebet**' (bad wind disease), but Nyankpa people don't talk about evil spirits 'possessing' or 'entering' people; the spirits stay outside. Each person is said to have a 'good/clean spirit' and an 'evil spirit' in them and the one you encourage is the one that dominates. Obviously there's much potential for a naive outsider getting wires crossed here and remaining blissfully unaware of it.

In the last week before Christmas I squeezed in another week with Nyankpa working with a consultant-in-training Pelumi (a missionary from south-west Nigeria) as she led the check of Matthew 1-4 under my supervision. Do pray for her and her family as they prepare to move to Kenya this month to start PhD studies at NEGST, where we studied before coming to Nigeria.

### **Julie: Mark Drama**

Two weeks after touching down in Nigeria we were in the midst of our conference a 40 minute drive outside Jos, this year focussed on the passion narrative from Mark's gospel. We opened with an intense and captivating performance of the Mark Drama. Our colleague Christy had done a fantastic job preparing two different casts and **Katie Piggot came from Glasgow** to direct them in 2 performances, for our translation colleagues and for pastors and other ministry leaders. A week later the second cast put it on twice again in Jos.

Thus was fulfilled a desire we had 10 years ago to see the Mark Drama introduced to Nigeria as a way to help people get deep into Mark's gospel and bring the story to life off the page. With countless ways things could have gone wrong, we thank God for making it happen.

Julie had a very intense time preparing for and coordinating the conference as soon as we returned. We thank God it ended well despite quite a few people including the speaker being sick beforehand and during it. Since the conference our office morning devotions focussed on Mark's gospel too and many of us have been struck by how we see the details in a fresh way having experienced the whole Mark drama.

Plans are already afoot for other groups to put on the **Mark drama in English and Hausa in Jos and further north**, working with several church groups. Translation is always harder than people think, but also powerful when done well. We still need your prayers!

### **Give thanks to God for many answers to prayer:**

1. The **Mark drama** was very well received and many are enthusiastically planning for it to continue in other languages and locations.
2. Our office translation support team has been growing hugely as **many new Nigerian staff** join to help with new translation projects and new initiatives.
3. Our friend Ailsa Hamilton got her **Visa approved** to visit us along with Rebekah for Christmas. They arrived on Monday 18th. We thank God for good time with family and friends together during Rebekah and Ailsa's visit; it's Ailsa's first time to Nigeria.
4. I was able to finally wrap up some **long overdue reports** for Nyankpa.
5. **Good progress in Ashɛ team training**, particularly exciting to see Mrs Lami's progress as the first female translator; she's a fun and insightful asset to the team.

### **Join with us to ask God for:**

1. **Ashɛ team**: pray for good use of Ishɛ scriptures in church events.
2. Pray for a good response as **Isuindok** motivates Ashɛ **youth** and **village literacy** teachers to use the resources we have made.
3. Pray for **good direction** for the team as they resume work this week.



Nyankpa team Alaska and Lazarus, meeting with Jono on Google Meet from Canada, and Pelumi the Translation Consultant in Training.

4. **Family:** pray for good travel back (today and tomorrow) after Rebekah and Ailsa's visit.
5. Many of our friends and colleagues have **lost relatives recently**; pray for comfort and trust in God.  
(In the Ashε team Mrs Lami lost a grandchild and another relative, Jo'ash lost his junior brother, amongst others.)
6. Pray for **calm and comfort** in the communities attacked over Christmas (see below).

Thanks for your support and participation in building God's worldwide kingdom.

*Love from David, Julie, Rebekah, Elizabeth, Abigail and Helen*



Staff and some of their families at the conference/retreat at Miango Rest Home in late October.  
Look out for us in the middle, and Katie Piggot near the front too.

As you may have seen on the news, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/least-113-killed-attacks-central-nigeria-local-official-2023-12-25/>, there were deadly attacks on several villages to the south of Jos in the wee hours of Christmas morning. No SIL staff were involved in either incident and all staff are safe. Please continue to pray for Nigeria and for God's mercy, peace and unfailing love in this situation.