

Martin and Marie Dicke—Missionaries Serving the Lord in Papua New Guinea

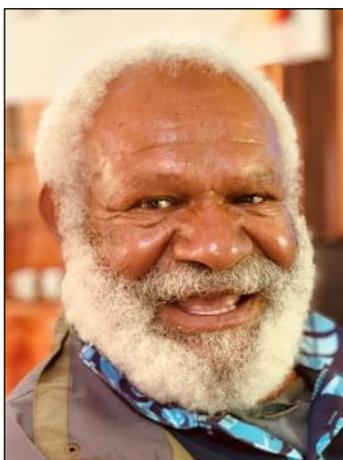


The Enga Bible Translation Project

The Apostle John begins his Gospel with some of the most profound and poetic words in Scripture. He refers to the birth of Christ with these words: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.... (John 1:14) However, these words are still not fully accessible and available to many people in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea.

Enter the Rev. Maniosa Yakasa. He looks a little bit like Saint Nicholas, but his primary focus has become the translation of the Bible into the Enga language.

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Rev. Maniosa Yakasa, a pastor of the Gutnius (Good News) Lutheran Church who is heading up the Enga Bible Translation Project.

*By Reverend Maniosa Yakasa with
Martin Dicke*

Reverend Maniosa Yakasa (shown above) is a pastor of the Gutnius (Good News) Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. Originally from the Sirunki area of the Enga Province, he graduated from Martin Luther Seminary, Lae in 1975. One of his professors and mentors was the Rev. Dr. Willard Burce who served as Principal of that seminary for many years and as an LCMS missionary to PNG for 40 years from the founding of the mission field in the Enga Province in 1948 until his retirement in 1998. After graduating from MLS, Rev. Maniosa served as a pastor, but later took a job with the PNG Department of Justice due to his distaste for church politics. Later he served as a school teacher at both the elementary and secondary levels. Now he serves as Lead Translator of the Enga Bible Translation Team, an effort begun in 2013 to translate the entire Bible into the Enga language. Here is his story.

Introduction

According to the census of 2000 an estimated 295,000 people live in the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea. Some estimate the population now to be between 400,000-500,000. Although there are 11 different

languages spoken in the province, 90% of the people speak Enga. Linguists have identified as many as 18 dialects among Enga speakers. In a land of over 850 languages, Enga is unique in that it is the largest single-speaking language group in the country. Even still, the entire Bible has yet to be translated into Enga. Although some language groups in PNG are dying out, the Enga language is an active, living, and growing language. This is the story of how the Enga Bible translation project began.

The Jesus Film in Enga

Sometime in early 2006 my cousin Mina and her husband told me about a Christian movie called *The Jesus Film*. They said that it was the best Christian movie in the world and had been translated into hundreds of languages. I did not know about it but was very interested in seeing it and translating it. I consulted the Lord in my daily prayers. I talked with Steven Thomas, former director of the Papua New Guinea Bible Translation Association and asked him if he could find the script. He found it and gave it to me to translate sharing with me some useful

translation skills. Even though I had not seen the film, I began to translate the script without delay. Soon the job was complete, and I gave my translation to Steven Thomas for editing. Upon completing the editing, Steven Thomas contacted Campus Crusade for Christ, the makers of the film, to see if they were interested in having it dubbed into the Enga language. In 2007 the Campus Crusade team came to PNG and dubbed the film into Enga.

I had asked all Christian Church denominations to participate in the dubbing, but received no response. I asked my Lutheran Bishop, but he remarked, "Jesus is not in the pictures, but is in the Bible." I responded, "Yes, you can paint Jesus' picture with your mouth in your sermons." Due to this lack of interest, we engaged interested persons from the streets to do the Enga voice-over. I served as the narrator and voice director. Pastor Frank Paiyaka, a Lutheran pastor who graduated from Martin Luther Seminary in Lae in 2002 and is now serving with me on the Enga Bible Translation Team, voiced the character of Jesus. Soon the job

was complete. When the completed Enga Jesus Film arrived in the Enga Province, the Roman Catholic Bishop Arnold Aluwe arranged the first screening with all of his priests and elders at the Par Catholic Center. After viewing the film, they exclaimed, “Well done!”

Beginning the Work

Their response set me on fire to translate the Old Testament into Enga. Previously only the New Testament had been translated. I asked the Lutheran leaders, but again they showed no interest. Their lack of interest did not dampen my hope for a Bible for the people of Enga in their own language. Besides that, the 1988 Enga New Testament is in an older version of Enga with mixed dialects and used only by Lutherans since Lutheran missionaries had pioneered the work. So I reached out to other denominations and over 10 mainline churches agreed to work together. Once again, I consulted Steven Thomas. We talked a lot. I said, “You are a Lutheran at the helm of the PNG translation institution. Why not translate the Old Testament?” He finally said, “The old Enga New Testament is overdue for revising. You do the New Testament first.” The Lord was consulted in prayer for resources, more participating church denominations, and an advisor. In 2012 Steven Thomas called me to inform me that a young man with a Masters in Theology was interested in serving as our advisor. After more discussion and prayer I said, “We need him. Have him engaged with the Enga Bible

Translation Team.” His name is Adam Boyd. He has a mission-minded wife, two sons, and a daughter. Thank the Good Lord for His grace. Adam assists us in the technical aspects of our work, checking the original languages of the Bible, translating concepts difficult to convey in the Enga language, backtranslations, and many other aspects of our work. He is directing us toward a more literal translation of Scripture similar to what was done with the English Standard Version (ESV) translation.

Translation Begins

In 2013 work began as a nine-member team was trained at the Wycliffe Bible Translators PNG headquarters in Ukarumpa. As we got into the translation work itself, we first tried to simply revise the 1988 Enga New Testament. We soon realized this would not work since the Enga was old and covered 30 years being from the 1950s to the 1980s. That translation was also in three dialects: Mai Enga, Laeyapo Enga, and Central Enga. Steven Thomas advised, “You should translate only into Central Enga.” So we are now translating the Bible into the Central Enga dialect making use of the 1988 New Testament and the Enga New Testaments in the Kyaka and the Sau dialects as references.

There are 16 prominent church bodies in the Enga Province. All are supportive of this translation project. In 2017, additional translators were trained at Ukarumpa. The team now consists of five members, three of whom are Lutheran: me as Lead Translator, Rev. Frank Paiyaka,

and Reuben Yonasa. We are all members of the Bible Translation Association of PNG and are making sure that the translation accurately reflects Lutheran theology. We meet daily at the Christian Life Church in Wabag, the capital of the Enga Province. Coincidentally, just as I studied with LCMS missionary the Rev. Dr. Willard Burce in the 1970s, my younger colleague Rev. Frank Paiyaka took a course from him on Martin Luther’s Small Catechism in 2002. With both of us on the Enga Bible Translation Team, one could say that this project could be considered an extension of his work here and his dedication to training faithful Lutheran pastors in PNG.

By 2019 a first draft of the entire New Testament had been completed. Currently the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts have been checked by a consultant and are ready for printing. The other books are in the process of being re-edited and revised. Those translations are being tried out and checked in local churches and villages. Regarding the Old Testament, the first draft of the books of Genesis and Exodus have been completed and six other books are now being translated. The Abraham story has been checked by a consultant and is ready for printing.

Recording and Literacy

Since many people in the Enga Province are not able to read, recordings are being made of the books as they are completed. These recordings are placed on the micro cards so that people can play them on touch screen

phones. They are also being placed on solar powered mp3 players that are being distributed. A literacy training conference was also recently held to train lay and church workers on how to teach people to read.

Motto and Additional Work

Our motto is: “Let the people of Enga be transformed by the Grace of God through the Enga Bible and may they believe in Jesus and receive life eternal.” Our objective is: “These men will by the Grace of God translate both the Old and New Testament into the Central Enga dialect as perfectly as possible in the shortest time possible. ‘Not by might and power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.’ (Zechariah 4:6)”

Translation is not our only work. We recently recorded a statement in the Enga language against the false Sanguma practice in the Enga Province. Our team is engaged in playing it and preaching against Sanguma when we have the opportunity. We have also physically gone into villages and rescued women from being tortured. God was and is with us in this effort. This practice appears to be growing cold, but there are still incidents that arise. Missionary Anton Lutz is also fighting hard with us against Sanguma practice in Enga and PNG.

Conclusion

Please pray for us and for our work until that day spoken of by the Apostle Paul when “every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:8)



To contact us, please write to martin.dicke@lcms.org or:

Martin and Marie Dicke
PO Box 803
Mt Hagen 281
Western Highlands Province
Papua New Guinea

Please support the missionary service of Martin and Marie Dicke with a monthly, quarterly, or yearly giving plan or with a one-time gift. Visit lcms.org/dicke or call LCMS Mission Advancement at (888) 843-5267.

Alternatively, you can send checks payable to the LCMS with “PNG/Dickes” on the Memo Line to:

LCMS Mission Advancement
1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63122-7226

You may also visit our dear friends at missioncentral.us/dicke or send your gifts to:

Mission Central
40718 Highway E-18
Mapleton, IA 51034