



REBEKAH

# DREW'S NEWS

December 2017

Photo: Carol Sanio

A belated merry Christmas to you all, and an early happy New Year!

I had the privilege of beginning the season of Advent in a uniquely meaningful way: by working with the Tiaang translation team to translate the Christmas story! A few passages from Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2 had previously been drafted, but there were many parts of the story that had not been completed, and all of it needed checking. As we dug deeper into some of the cultural and biblical background to this story and read through the passage to be translated each day, I was more than once deeply moved by the power of this amazing story, and God's incredible gift to us in his Son. However, there were quite a few light-hearted moments as well!

The Tiaang people, like many cultures in Papua New Guinea (PNG), traditionally didn't have plates or bowls or jugs or other such man-made containers for food or drink. Instead, they would use banana leaves, coconut shells, sea shells, etc. as their cooking and eating utensils. Although plates, cups, spoons, etc. are now commonplace items in every home, people still frequently use

natural items for such purposes. For example, when my host family had a piglet, they used half of a giant clam shell as its water bowl. One day, we were looking over the already-translated part of the Christmas story when Mary laid Jesus in a manger. Guess what word had been used for "manger"? Yup, giant clam shell! As tickled as I am to think of the baby Jesus being tucked into a giant clamshell, like the Anne Geddes image below, we ultimately decided that the clam shell was not historically accurate and had to go! So now, Mary is laying him in the not quite so exotic, but still amazing when you think about it, "place for feeding animals."

<http://pokec.azet.sk/klub/starostlivost-o-babotka/fotoalbumy/babetka-fotky/ft-406690408>



If Jesus had been born on Djaul, perhaps his "manger" would have looked like this? 😊

Another fun moment came in Luke 1:29, when Mary is perplexed/confused/troubled by the angel's greeting. The Tiaang word that was used to describe this emotional state was *kulál*, a single word which means something like "troubled and upset." The problem was, this word sounds identical to the two words *ku lál*, which means that your stomach wants to eat fish! Soon the translators were splitting their sides laughing, because it sounded like when the angel greeted Mary, her stomach wanted to eat fish - something that a pregnant woman might indeed crave! Moreover, the word *kulál* wasn't very ideal in this context, because it can include the emotion of anger. We decided to change this word to another very similar sounding word, *kunál*, which more simply means that Mary was confused. Later on, we decided that *kulál* would be a good word to describe how Joseph felt when he was considering his decision to divorce Mary in Mat. 1:20. (Most English versions do not convey very well the emotion of the Greek here, which could be translated, "while he was fuming about this...") We also used *kulál* to describe how Herod felt when he heard the magi's reason for coming to Jerusalem in Mat. 2:3!

All this translation work took place during the last two weeks of November, in Kavieng town. Immediately prior to this was the visit of five veterinarians from Canada, whose visit I helped organize, and whom I had the privilege of hosting. Here in PNG, we rarely have access to a vet, and when we do, the vet often lacks adequate resources to do his job well. So their visit was much appreciated by everyone! We started out with a busy week in Ukarumpa, which included time at the Pony Club (where they taught me how to float [i.e. file] horses' teeth, photo right); two days of surgeries (primarily spays



Photo: Faith Turner

Working on translating the Christmas story in Kavieng, with Ephraim (left) and Esau (right).



Photo: Kathy Watson

The vet team (after teaching a class on parasites at Ukarumpa International School) left to right: Jocelyn, Christina, Carol, Helena, Justine (and me!).



Photo: Helena Dean

and neuters) and consultations for dogs and cats; a workshop on basic care and first aid for pigs, chickens, goats, dogs, and cats; and a hike to a nearby mountain ridge (header photo on page 1; that's me and Buddy in the foreground, looking down on Ukarumpa). Then, we flew to Kavieng and spent a week there together. We had a day of dog and cat surgeries and consultations there, which was organized by one of the local resort owners – and in exchange, they offered us a free night at their resort! It was nice to have some relaxing days at the beach and snorkelling after our busy time in Ukarumpa.

After the vets left, I worked with Ephraim and Esau (Esau is new to the translation team) for two weeks, and by the end of that time they had forty copies of the Christmas story draft to take back to their villages. **It is my hope that they were able to do the next stage of checking, with people in the villages, in the weeks leading up to Christmas**—the perfect time to gather people together to read and listen to the story in the Tiaang language for the first time!

So, how did my back hold up through all of this? While the vets were here, it was amazing; **I had nine pain-free days in a row!** Before their visit, the record was only two days in a row. **However, two days into the translation work, the pain returned**, and I've only had three pain-free days (total) since then. This shows pretty clearly that the primary thing keeping me in pain now is sitting or standing at my desk, which unfortunately is 95% of my work. There's not much I can do about this, except **keep praying for healing!**

Thank you for continuing to pray for my teammate, Janell, as well. Her current



Above: Surgeries in Kavieng

Right: This tiny kitten was spayed, and I got to cuddle her for the next hour or so while she was recovering, to make sure she didn't get too cold. 😊

Below: Fun with starfish while snorkelling



Photo: Carol Sanio

situation can best be summed up in her own words:

**“Wycliffe has graciously provided a means for me to work part time for a period following the conclusion of my medical leave this month.** I am thus granted a longer recovery period to increase my working hours up to full time as I prepare to return to my job overseas. This is cause for much thanksgiving! However, **while many of my migraine symptoms have held steady at an improved state, two of the most debilitating symptoms have inexplicably and significantly worsened...**Very recently, a friend tipped me off to the fact that **this could be due to side effects from one of the migraine medications!** There are adjustments that can be made to address the problem, so I immediately contacted my doctor to see if these might help in my case. My plan is to give myself another month or two **to see whether my symptoms resolve after the adjustment.** If that resolution does not occur, it will be necessary for me to leave Wycliffe, probably for a year or two, in order to pursue other treatment options.”

As a new year approaches, I always wonder what the Lord has in store for me and the people I love. Even when I don't have a clear picture in my mind of what will happen, it is with anticipation and hope that I look forward to the future, because God is good, because he is love, and because he works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28). **I don't yet know when I will be able to go back to Djaul or Kavieng; I need wisdom to know what will be helpful or harmful for my painful back.** For January and February at least, I'm planning to stay and work in Ukarumpa, and see if it might be possible for me to go out again in March or April. I'll be saying goodbye to my housemate of the past

year, Amy, as she completes her internship here and heads back to the States. I'm looking forward to having my good friend, Catherine, as a housemate again for two weeks, and meeting her fiancé, Dan, at the end of January. It will be a bittersweet time as she is coming to pack up her things and say goodbye, being unable to continue working in PNG due to her ongoing health issues. But I will be seeing them again later on in the year, as a bridesmaid at their wedding. ☺ These are a few of the things I see on the horizon, but God knows what many other plans he has for 2018!

Thank you once again for standing with me and praying for me and the Tiaang translation program! (I've highlighted some praise and prayer requests in **bold.**) May his grace and peace fill you with joy in 2018 and beyond!

Rebekah

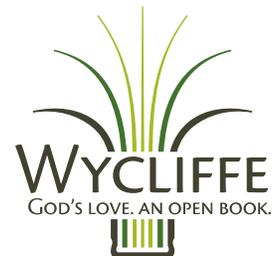
The vets and I got to visit a beautiful Australian barn owl that was rescued by a family here; it has a broken wing.



Photo: Carol Sanio

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