

## *The Sheppards in Liberia*

Shalom. We heard this word a lot in Israel, as people would wish each other "Shabbat Shalom" each Saturday. Although this word is often translated "peace", this advent we've been reflecting on the fuller meaning of this word, "wholeness, completeness, restoration", especially as it relates to the coming of the Prince of Shalom (Isaiah 9:6). Although we continue to face tough issues on a daily basis, we are sensing more shalom in our lives here.



**We were blessed by this generous gift of local produce**

Our prodigal 'son', whom you've read about in previous prayer letters, has come home and the shalom and joy we feel is deep.



**Shabbat Shalom!**

We are continuing our tradition of a neighborhood Christmas pageant, and as children and teens gather each evening to practice, our hearts are warmed seeing them singing worshipfully about the Savior who was born to reconcile God and sinners. This year, the majority of the children participating come from Muslim families, but because of the deep relationships we have formed with their families over the years, their parents are willing for them to participate.



**Meet the cast of the Christmas pageant!**

Last month, we had a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration with our Bible translation consultant, Don Slager, as our special guest. He worked with the Manyá team for two weeks in November to complete the consultant checking of Exodus and Leviticus. Don has an eye for detail that is unparalleled, helping us spot omissions and formatting issues in the text, as well as knowing the right questions to ask the mother-tongue translators to make sure our translation communicates clearly. We also appreciate Don's warm personality. He has become like a grandfather to our children as they enjoy going on walks with him and



playing board games in the evening. His visits are a highlight of the year for us.



**Our Thanksgiving Feast**

Right after Don left, John Mark spent a week working with the Konyaka team to complete a primer for their language, revise the Genesis summary book, and complete another book in the series with selected passages from Exodus and other parts of the Pentateuch. The day they left Voinjama, they took a six-hour motorbike ride to make it in time for their radio station appointment to share the gospel in their language. Their dedication is commendable.



**Visiting a Manya literacy class with the Konyaka translation team**

Our last update letter was sent after an intense season of setbacks and discouragements. We thank you so much for your prayers and messages to us. We are in a much better place mentally now, and we rejoice to see the answers to your prayers. Against the doctors' expectations, the vision in Sara's injured eye has been fully restored. It has also been a real encouragement to see believers from around the world working together to bring the love of Christ to the Manya. In early December, a group of conservative Mennonites from the US and Canada joined with some local health care workers from the Free Pentecostal clinic to host a medical outreach in a predominantly Manya village. John Mark joined them, along with a Nigerian missionary friend, to share some health and Bible teaching with the patients who were waiting. Over 70 patients were served that day, and the name of Jesus was lifted up. There is a small church in this village made up of people from neighboring ethnic groups, but who speak Manya and have a desire to see their Muslim neighbors know the Lord. The pastor of this church has recently begun working with the Manya Bible translation project, and started a Manya literacy class in the village.



**Christmas brunch with the medical team**

We rejoice that Faith Comes by Hearing has finally released the Manya New Testament audio recording, which we recorded in October 2023. It is a polished recording with sound effects and locally relevant background music, the first of its kind in Manya. Soon an app will be available with the text and audio of the Manya New Testament, as well as a video based on the book of Luke. These resources have great potential to make a lasting impact among the Manya and other neighboring groups in Liberia and Guinea.





## Handing off the first micro-SD cards programmed with the Manya New Testament

Recently, some of the men working with John Mark on the Bible translation projects have asked for laptop computers. If you happen to have a second-hand laptop you would like to donate to a good cause, please let us know.

We want to express our heartfelt appreciation again for your generous support and faithful prayers. May you have a shalom-filled Christmas as well.



**The kids showing off a batch of bush cherries ready for cooking**

### **Praise and Prayer:**

- Praise for the healing of Sara's eye.
- Praise for the release of the Manya New Testament audio.
- Pray that these recordings will spread widely in Manya communities and make a great impact.
- Praise for the successful medical outreach.
- Pray that the seeds planted there will bear much fruit.
- Pray that the children participating in the pageant will grasp the true meaning of Christmas.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

**Because of the nature of where and who we are called to serve, we ask that you not forward this email or post it publicly without our permission. Thank you for your support!**

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