

## *The Sheppards in Liberia*



Hello from northern Liberia, where we are happy to report that the worst of the hot season is behind us. After months of intense drought, 100°+ daily temperatures, and hazy skies from all the farmland being burned, this week we had three nights of heavy rain. This brought the flying termites, and the kids in our neighborhood are now busy collecting them to parch and eat.



In January, a small team from River Shores Church in Wisconsin came to visit us. The schedule was jam-packed, and the team battled dehydration and a virus, but we accomplished a great deal in the nine days they were with us. Some of the highlights included a day of Vacation Bible School at our church in Voinjama, as well as a medical clinic in one of the Muslim villages nearby. Some Christian healthcare professionals from Voinjama joined us, and we served over 400 people in one day, sharing the gospel, training people in basic health and hygiene principles, giving out deworming medication and vitamins, providing flip-flops for all 200 children, and treating those who were suffering from various sicknesses.



After saying goodbye to the team in Monrovia, we stayed two weeks for John Mark to launch another Bible translation project in the Konyaka language, which is closely related to Manyà. It was a joy working with believers from this unreached people group to translate the Word of God into their mother tongue, and we drafted the book of Jonah as well as 1 John.



Sara volunteered at the ELWA hospital, meeting every day with burn victims who had been injured when an overturned tanker truck exploded. Besides the terrible physical injuries, the patients struggled with the trauma of it all. Sara listened to their stories, prayed with them, and shared with them the hope of the gospel. One young man from a Muslim background was impressed by the love he saw in the Christians who cared for him and ended up making a commitment for Christ, telling Sara, "I don't care what my family says. I have decided to follow Jesus."





After returning home to Voinjama, a 15-year-old girl in our community gave birth at home to a baby boy. When we saw the size of the baby, we insisted on taking them to the clinic for a check-up, and the baby was eventually admitted into the NICU, where we found out he weighed only two pounds. Sara continues to visit the mother and baby every day, bringing diapers and meals for the mother, who has been all but abandoned by her family. While Sara provides kangaroo care for the infant, Audrey sits with the young mothers to help them pass the long, hot days by bringing movies to watch together. To show her appreciation for our family, the mother named the baby John Mark. In addition, Sara has been able to use the medical training she received at Equip last year to treat a dangerously malnourished 13-month-old who was turned away from the local hospital. Both babies have shown remarkable progress.

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The work on the Old Testament in Manya continues to move ahead at a good pace. John Mark recently began using a program called ScriptureForge which uses artificial intelligence to draft new portions of scripture, based on books that have been previously completed in the target language. The resulting text still needs editing and careful checking but is much faster and easier than manually drafting a text.



Last week our translation team also met with Don Slager, a translation consultant with United Bible Societies. We worked through Ruth and Joshua and the first six chapters of Judges. Don's careful eye for detail is invaluable, helping us make sure our translation is faithful to the Hebrew text as well as clear and natural in the Manyà language. Don has a warm and caring personality, and our kids loved playing board games with him, showing him their pets (including our baby otter!), and hiking on some nearby hills.



In all the busyness of our life and ministry here, we just want to take a moment to say thank you again for your faithful prayers and financial support. Knowing that you're standing with us is what keeps us going.

**Praise and Prayer:**

- Praise for the start of a new Bible translation in Konyaka!
- Praise for the good progress on the Manya Old Testament.
- Pray that the Manya New Testament audio will become available soon.
- Pray for continued improvement in the babies we are caring for.
- Pray that during this month of fasting, God would reveal himself to the Many people through dreams and visions.