

Bits from Bill

Using Information Technology to Help Bring the Word of God
to the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil

September, 2021



A Fast Year—God’s Year

It’s hard to believe that we are already entering the final three months of 2021. It has been a very different year, yet it has gone by quickly. God is doing big things—things that I suspect will have a profound effect on the Church. So as this year draws to a close, let us keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Cross-Cultural Experiences

No, I am not talking about myself. That would be nothing new. Rather, I am referring to the students taking the Linguistics course. Since all of them are planning to work cross-culturally, the course planners always try to include as many such experiences as possible. And just this month, I got to be part of two of them.

The first opportunity was to play language helper for a team of students translating a Scripture passage into English. This was actually rather fun—and it gave them an opportunity to experience some of the issues that they might encounter someday doing a real translation.

The second opportunity was to give them a taste of American food. Two years ago, the students persuaded me to do a “Cheeseburger Night”. This year I did it again. It may be a small thing, but who knows what kind of strange foods they will encounter in their future ministries?

For me, these were a couple of more areas where I could contribute, even in a small way, toward preparing future missionaries for cross-cultural work. So please give thanks for these small—but fun!—opportunities.

Server Changes

The ALEM center has two server computers, and both have a few years under their belts. However, they are good quality machines, and merely needed additional memory and hard drive space in order to make them more useful. We have already upgraded one machine, and are planning to get the parts necessary to upgrade the other.

With the additional resources, it became possible to use virtualization to install multiple servers on the upgraded one. This allowed us to dedicate most of it to file storage and wifi authentication, while leaving one rarely-used legacy server deactivated most of the time, but ready to run whenever needed. So please give thanks for the possibilities that this modern technology provides for us.

Bible Translation in an Age of Uncertainty

In the last couple of decades, the Bible translation paradigm has shifted considerably from what it was when I first arrived in Brazil. At that time, translators from organizations such as Wycliffe did all the work, giving the final product to the target language group when it was completed. However, while this was effective and served well for many years, times have changed.

Today, Bible translation focuses on localization, on the work being done by national workers and mother-tongue translators. Some of the positive results of this approach include a sense of ‘ownership’, greater involvement by national and local churches, and more ‘natural’ translations.

Another advantage is that fully-localized Bible translation is not dependent upon access to outside resources.

Today, we live in an international world. Travel and communication between most countries is relatively simple. But as events of last year showed us, what if something happens—economic, political, or whatever—that shuts down this ease of international access?

Most of us hope that Christ will return soon. But what if He delays? We do not know His plans. But one thing is clear, and that is that His word is essential for Church growth and maturity. God can use whomever He wants. And perhaps this is another area where He is preparing the Church for uncertain times.

Because one other thing is also clear: *Jesus*—not we—will build His Church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. So keep on praying!



Cooking on Cheeseburger Night

Praise

- For the opportunities to help provide the students with some cross-cultural experiences.
- For the opportunity to help the students prepare to bring God's word to those who still need it.
- For the resources to upgrade the servers, and for the opportunities provided by virtualization.
- For what God is doing to ensure that His word reaches all peoples on Earth.

Prayer

- For the students as they finish the Linguistics course and prepare for the next step in their ministries.
- That we would be able to get the necessary parts to upgrade the second server and set it up as a backup.
- For the future of Bible translation and Church growth, as God works to make sure that both continue in a changing world.

May you see the Hand of the
LORD in everything that He does in
your life,

Bill

¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

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(Make gifts payable to Wycliffe Bible Translators. Include a separate note saying "Preference for the Wycliffe ministry of Bill Penning, Ministry Account #232016.")

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SIL Brazil Website: <http://www.silbrazil.org>

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