

Heart Returns on Investment

Janet Vaughan shares Bible translation with anyone who will listen, including her Sunday school class and her trainer at the gym. She says, “Everyone I tell is interested, but it’s just a story to them. Being a part of the work of Bible translation reinvigorates your own faith, and it makes you so happy for those receiving God’s Word for the first time.” Although Janet may sound like a linguist or a Wycliffe Bible Translators missionary, she’s actually a passionate financial partner of Wycliffe Bible Translators USA.

Two years ago Janet and her husband, Chip, felt God was guiding them to make a significant gift through a family fund established by Chip’s parents, Cy and Jean Vaughan, to support kingdom work. Prayer, research and counsel from their advisor with Ronald Blue Trust, a Christian financial planning company, led them to consider investing in the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Janet says, “We wanted to get the funds out to do God’s work. And what’s more key than giving God’s Word for each individual language? If people don’t hear the gospel, they don’t know.”

The couple’s first meeting with Wycliffe representative Amanda Fewless also happened to be Amanda’s first visit in her role. Amanda was excited to get to know Chip and Janet—to learn about their family, and the things and places they care about most. “One thing that stood out during that first meeting was their desire to be wise stewards,” Amanda said. “They had not been involved in Bible translation before, and they were asking great questions about it.”

The more the Vaughans prayed and thought it through, the more Chip felt like his parents really would have wanted to support work in Africa. They began learning more about the Dodoma project—a project in Tanzania that was doing translation work in a cluster approach, where four related

languages worked together to complete their Scripture translations. Each language was in a different phase of Bible translation, ranging from an unreached people group with no written language yet, all the way to a language that was almost ready to dedicate their New Testament. It provided the Vaughans with a spectrum of Bible translation needs toward which to contribute.



Chip and Janet reviewed the Dodoma Cluster project materials with their adult children, and decided as a family to make a gift to support the work. Chip felt that his parents would be both honored and humbled to play a part in providing Scripture to so many who had never had the chance to hold a Bible in their language. Amanda kept them linked to the project by introducing them to staff working on the translations and forwarding on prayer requests and updates from the teams.

“You start out giving to help people that don’t have God’s Word,” Janet said. “You forget that in the process, your connection will bring the work to life. It’s not just giving money, it’s so much beyond that. It makes you a participant in the project.”

BY **MELISSA STILLMAN**

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Melissa Stillman has served with Wycliffe Bible Translators USA for 16 years and is currently the Associate Director of Development. She loves hearing and sharing the stories of gospel patrons—like Janet and Chip Vaughan—that God has called to be a part of Bible translation through financial investment.

That's the moment that Wycliffe is inviting people into: discovering how God is calling you to participate in Bible translation and receive the blessing that comes from obeying that call. Representatives like Amanda are able to minister to donors by building relationships and finding the way God is leading them to partner in the work—through prayer, giving of their time and talents and financial investment—and facilitating opportunities for them to be involved.

The Vaughns represent thousands of generous partners, around the United States and around the world, who are supporting Bible translation efforts. Individuals, families and businesses from Ghana to Singapore, Panama to Indonesia, are stepping into the work through their prayers and financial investments.

An Unexpected Invitation

A few months after the Vaughns' gift, Amanda surprised the family with an invitation to visit the Dodoma cluster project. Health concerns and scheduling challenges kept Chip and their kids from going, but Janet eagerly accepted the offer. In August 2017 Janet and Amanda traveled with a small group to Tanzania to visit the work the Vaughan family had been involved in through prayer and giving. They were even able to attend the New Testament dedication for one of the languages in the Dodoma cluster, the Burunge!



The sights and sounds of the dedication day are something that Janet will never forget. "We took a van to the ceremony and from our van we saw people walking long distances along the road, dressed up for the celebration of their Bible dedication," Janet recalled. "We heard pastors speak and pray, the choir sang three or four times and there was worship through dancing. Several hundred people were standing the whole time in the hot sun, holding babies in their arms. But they came there for

a purpose—walked all that distance, waited all that time—because they so wanted the Bible in their language. You saw the people kiss their Bibles and hold them up to their chests like a precious gift. It caused me to treasure my own Scriptures more, and it changed my heart as much as I knew it was going to change their hearts."

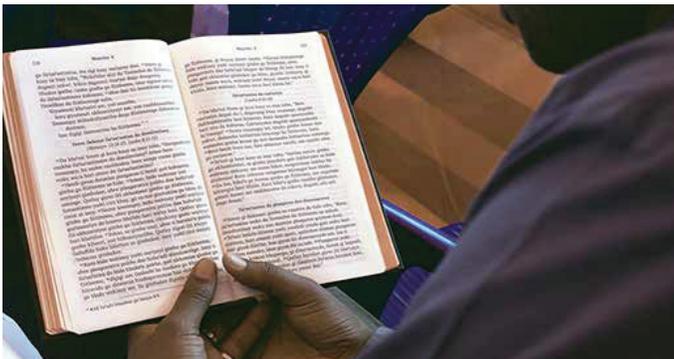


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As meaningful as the celebration was, Janet was most moved by the opportunity to see where each of the four languages were in the translation task. "We were blessed to see the entire process—to go into the translation office and see translators diligently work through a passage of Scripture, then to see a community check where people in a village sat and read the text together and talked about it," she said. We even went out one night when they showed the JESUS Film. Everything culminated with the Burunge celebration where translation has been accomplished and they were passing out their new Bibles. It was a quick encapsulation of what takes years to happen."



One of the ways that Wycliffe conveys to financial partners their key role in the task is by connecting them as closely with the work taking place on the field as possible. Wycliffe wants donors to see the true impact of their investment through regular project reports and prayer updates. After months of supporting the Dodoma teams from the U.S., it felt like a reunion of sorts for Janet to meet those serving in the Dodoma project. She says, “Going over and meeting the missionaries and the nationals that are doing the translation work for their own language fills you up. It was amazing to see the passion, determination and drive the team has for bringing God’s Word to people in their heart language.”



Working Together Toward Completion

Traveling to Africa together formed a bond between Amanda and Janet. “Getting to know Janet, and seeing her use her spiritual gift of giving, has been awesome,” Amanda said. “For her to be willing to pick up from here and go visit the work, it really drove it home. Her spirit of generosity and desire to bless people became very clear on the trip. And she and her family are ultimately giving a gift that will impact those communities forever.”

Janet and Amanda remain close, with the Vaughans opening their Atlanta area home for Amanda to stay with them when she’s passing through. The ladies often find that brief meetings turn into visits that are several hours long. In fact, they enjoyed a road trip together to South Carolina this past spring. Janet says, “Connecting with Amanda was

wonderful. She is easy to be with, so we formed a good friendship quickly. She’ll call to say, ‘This is happening, does it interest you?’ And I feel free to call her with questions. That personal relationship draws you into the ministry.”



Chip and Janet want to stay involved with the Dodoma project in the near future. Because of the connections Janet made, the Burunge people are always close to her heart. She says, “I feel blessed when the team emails us to ask for prayer. And Amanda keeps us updated on what’s happening in the project. I have a heart for Africa, and we’re anxious to be a part of accomplishing what we saw there.”

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“The Dodoma cluster is a four-language project, and right now it’s our hope to help work through that to the completion of one or two more of them. Having seen people’s response to God’s Word in their language, I don’t want to jump into something new. We want to see completion in these groups, and help put Bibles in their hands. Through Wycliffe, we’re giving so people can receive the completed Scriptures in their heart language.”

