

NEW TRIBES MISSION OF CANADA

# NTM@work

your connection with tribal missions



**The Village that  
God Remembered** page 16



# NTM@work

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This photo by **David Uttley**  
and cover photo by **Gary Smith**

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# contents

**4 CONNECT:** While none of us can do everything, all of us can do something. Starting today, discover ways that you can contact, encourage, pray for, give to, or serve alongside NTM missionaries.

## **16 The Village that God Remembered:**

For many years, the Dinangat people watched and heard about missionaries coming to other tribes. They saw the changes. They knew God's Word had something to do with it. But no one ever came to the Dinangat village. Had they been forgotten? Would they ever know the truth? How could they get out of this darkness? Then one day, the answers came.

**READ** the online edition and **VIEW**  
additional photos and video from  
the Dinangat tribe in the online  
edition: [canada.ntm.org/  
ntm-at-work](http://canada.ntm.org/ntm-at-work)







## So, thank you.

After hearing *Firm Foundations* Bible lessons, culminating in a clear presentation of the gospel in his own language, a young Biem man said to me, “I know I should thank God for you guys but I want to thank all three of your families for bringing God’s talk here.”

We told him that, no, it’s not just the three families. There are literally thousands of people praying for you guys to understand God’s talk all over the world.

He then said, **“OK, then you go and tell them, all of them: Thank you. God’s talk has come to our island. Thank them for praying and sending you guys here.”**

— *Wayne Chen, missionary to the Biem people, Papua New Guinea*



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**“GOD HAD ONLY  
ONE SON, AND  
HE WAS A  
MISSIONARY.”**

—David Livingstone,  
pioneer missionary to Africa

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## Plenty of restrooms

During my language evaluation, the Paraguayan lady stopped me. She asked in a very sweet but puzzled way, “You have four children, true?”

“Yes, that’s right,” I replied and then had a moment of panic. “What did I tell you?”

She laughed. “You said: ‘I have four bathrooms — and I’m going to have another one!’”

I laughed until I almost cried. It’s a lot of work for us to learn language, but it’s also a lot of work for all the patient Paraguayans who have to listen to us practice on them. Good thing there is lots of comic relief sprinkled throughout.

— *Elijah and Moira Hall, Paraguay*

# What in the world is on my hands?

A big part of learning the Tigak culture and language is by observing how they do everything—fishing, cooking, washing clothes, conducting religious events, etc. I watch carefully, taking lots of notes and pictures, trying to capture the process step-by-step. Then I print out the pictures and go back to the person later who I watched do the process and ask about the language associated with each step. I show them a picture of Step One and ask: “What is that? What are you doing? Can you tell me the story of what we did that day by these pictures?”

And this is the 10-step story I got for making the blood-red dip called “bune.” Notice all the nouns and verbs I got from this one process:

**Step 1:** Get bune out of the tree by using a long bamboo pole or other tree branch. Poke at the ripe bune until it falls to the ground. (It looks like a giant ear of corn about two feet long that hasn’t been shucked yet.)

**Step 2:** Remove the leaves (shuck it to reveal the huge red “ear of corn” inside).

**Step 3:** Scrape the bune. Its skin is sort of pokey all over, which no one enjoys eating. So gently scrape it off with a particular type of seashell that works well for this job.

**Step 4:** Chop it into round sections and split those down the middle.

**Step 5:** Cut out the centre white part, leaving only the long, round red kernels of the outer part.

**Step 6:** Rinse it.

**Step 7:** Put it into boiling water and boil until very soft.

**Step 8:** Remove the pot from the fire. Remove bune from the pot and then carefully (it’s hot!) scrape the red kernels off (they’re still clinging to a little piece of husk) into a dish.

**Step 9:** Now comes the bloody... er ... I mean, messy part. Take handfuls of kernels and squeeze all the red stuff out into a bowl and discard the inner, hard part of the kernel left in your hand. This part of the process can also be a little painful. If you didn’t scrape the bune very well earlier on, your hands get poked by all the pokey stuff still on the kernels. And depending on how many bunes you are working on, the squeezing step can take quite a long time. It’s best to set up some sort of tag-team effort with a friend to give your hands a rest.

**Step 10:** Now dip banana, sweet potato or saksak in the bune (it looks like pesto sauce now). Enjoy!

— *Aimee Hedrick, Tigak tribe, Papua New Guinea*



# CONNECT

## Why are traditional stories so important?

*Hearing traditional tribal stories help missionaries understand a people group's culture and also provides illustrations which enable them to share God's Word clearly when the Bible teaching begins. The Mwinika people have a traditional story that, in a way, expresses the concept, "You snooze, you lose."*

Once there was genet [a type of wild cat] who got up and said: "I am going to the house of the king of the humans to marry his daughter." So he went to the king's house. When he arrived he greeted the king. He then greeted the other people and sat down. The people brought lunch and they all sat down together to eat.

Shortly after the genet arrived, the rabbit showed up. He greeted the people and they responded. The rabbit said, "Yes, it is me, I have arrived."

The king said: "Yes, you have found us. We are eating. Come and sit down and eat."

The rabbit said: "No. It is better that I first say what I came to say and then I can sit down and eat."

The king said, "Go ahead."

The rabbit said: "Sir, I have come here for a purpose. I have come courting. I want to marry your daughter."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"OK," the king said, "You have said what you wanted to say. Now come and eat." So the rabbit sat down to eat.

At that point the genet spoke up. He said: "What about me? I also came to court your daughter!"

The king said: "No you didn't. You came to eat."

— *Phil and Elin Henderson, Mwinika tribe, Mozambique*



# Romans and Mengens

The book of Romans should now be in the hands of Mengan believers.

Canadian Rebecca Preheim completed the final check of the translation in January. She and her translation co-worker, Kariang, work together to put God's Word in the language of the Mengan people of Papua New Guinea.

Kariang lives a 40-minute hike up the mountain from where Rebecca lives. Rebecca says, "She has faithfully helped me for many years, in spite of being the only believer in her village—and in spite of the persecution she faces from time to time." She's been making that hike twice a week to translate God's Word.

Preparing for the check, Rebecca wrote, "Kariang and I worked extremely hard, trying to get through all 16 chapters of Romans in one day. Graciously, the Lord enabled us to complete the work by late afternoon."

Your gift can help fund Bible translations for tribal people:  
[canada.ntm.org/projects/translation](http://canada.ntm.org/projects/translation)



CONNECT WITH...



## Steve and Natalie Hutchings

**Children:** Elyse and Daniel  
**Field of Service:** Asia Pacific  
**Ministry:** Tribal Church Planting  
**Sending Church:** Camden Uniting Church, Australia

Steve: I grew up in a Christian home, but when I was a teenager I got myself mixed up in drugs and alcohol. After 6 years of abuse, I hit rock bottom and lost all desire to live. In despair, I cried out to God and started secretly reading the Bible. The Lord Jesus pulled me out of addiction and hopelessness and gave me life like I have never had before. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." Galatians 2:20

Natalie: I was privileged to grow up in a Christian home and I always accepted the truth of the Gospel. In my teenage years, God provided close Christian friends to encourage me and keep my eyes fixed on Him. It was through tragic circumstances and the reality of death that I was brought to my knees in true acknowledgement of who God is and why He sent Jesus to die for me. From that point on, I grew in my understanding and faith and surrendered my life to His cause.

In 2006, before having children, we went to South Africa for one month to work amongst the Zulu people. This trip showed us the importance of knowing a language and to be able to communicate the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Being able to serve the people was a beautiful and humbling experience but when it came to the crunch, we were unable to share the reason why we were there. When we arrived back home, we questioned how effective our short term trip had been. Soon after this, God started to grow in us a desire for long term service, a desire to love and live amongst the people and to study God's Word more. Steve left his job to go to seminary and there came into contact with NTM missionaries. After talking to them, we saw the value of teaching the Bible chronologically and God placed in our hearts a desire for tribal people who have been isolated from the Gospel. What a privilege it would be to be part of a team who brings God's Word to those who have never heard it in their own language.

[steve\\_hutchings@ntm.org](mailto:steve_hutchings@ntm.org)

## I am the wife of Jesus

Early in our culture and language learning days, we stumbled across a way that the Bagwido people communicated their love for other people. They simply said, “I put you in my inner most being.” This is the Bagwido equivalent to the English expression, “I love you.” The problem is that the men only used that term for their children. They had never thought of loving their wives.

But once they came to Christ and learned the Biblical mandate to love their wives, they were forced to make a decision. And many made the right decision. Men started to “put their wives in their inner most being” by taking care of the children, washing dishes, collecting firewood and doing all sorts of things that had traditionally been women’s work. It helped them understand how earthly marriage is a picture of the heavenly one between Christ and His Church. Christ loved His own bride so much that He gave His own life in a sacrificial way. As the men came to terms with this, we began hearing something funny echo through the village, even from the lips of the toughest of men. They were simply saying, “I am the wife of Jesus.” Yes, that made us laugh, but they were getting the point.

— *Brian Holmquist, Bagwido tribe, Papua New Guinea*

## No black cats, ladders or rabbit’s feet?

During culture and language learning, one of our assignments was to ask our friends in the Asia-Pacific Region what kind of superstitions they have here. Boy, were we surprised at the answers!

- If a girl sits and eats on the front porch of the house she will end up marrying someone who has had a divorce.
- If you step on a frog you will have an ugly spouse.
- You have to be careful about cutting down big trees because spirits live in them.
- If a snake comes into your home or you lose a tooth in a dream, then someone in your family or extended family is going to die.
- You have to be careful not to die in a dream because then you will really die.

— *Ben and Ruth Kane, Asia-Pacific Region*







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"To know the will of God, we need an open Bible and an open map."  
—William Carey  
pioneer missionary to India

### \* pray

When missionary Charlie Patton and his wife, Ruth, take walks together, Charlie says, "those walks are well-lit and we know exactly where we are going. We even know about how long our walks will take." But the path that Charlie set out to walk toward being a missionary pilot in **Brazil** has been very different. "All we knew," Charlie says, "was that the Lord asked us to... walk in the direction of setting up a flight ministry to serve the needs of our Brazilian missionaries who are taking the Gospel to isolated people groups." He's finally come to the point of taking necessary exams. Please take a moment right now to pray that he passes all the exams, and the other hurdles on the way to flying in Brazil.

You can receive daily or weekly prayer requests by email. Find out more: [canada.ntm.org/prayer](http://canada.ntm.org/prayer)



# CONNECT

## A little less lost

I sat in the auditorium that evening along with all the other parents and watched our graduates walk across the stage to receive their diplomas from NTBI. And I was extremely thankful for the choice each one of them had made to be there. Some of the students came already knowing what they wanted to do with their lives and now, with a solid Biblical foundation under them, would pursue it. Others had arrived unsure of what God had for them and even now, still weren't completely clear on their next step. But what better place to find the path God had designed specifically for them, than at a school where God's Word is taught every day? They regularly get to hear what He's doing around the world while making lasting friendships and



memories along the way. While every student may not have found all the answers they were looking for, they would move on to the next step in their lives a little less lost than before they had started. And that's what I was thankful for.

—Debbie Burgett, Contributing Editor

Apply to New Tribes Bible Institute today: [ntbi.org](http://ntbi.org)



## \* praise

Missionary Ben Buckner faced a challenge. Several Nakanai believers were nurturing disagreements and he was tasked with helping them to sort out the problems. "Please pray for humble hearts and for there to be a spirit of grace from everyone," Ben wrote. Would you pray today for Ben as he kindly and respectfully tries to help unite the Nakanai church in Papua New Guinea?

Help reach tribes and transform lives by praying daily or weekly: [canada.ntm.org/prayer](http://canada.ntm.org/prayer)



## Tasty treats

It was a vine-gathering trip into the jungle when my friend suddenly grabbed my machete and climbed a tree to get some ant eggs. She suffered many ant bites in the process, but felt it a small price to pay for the tasty eggs. And in case you ever want to try some, they can be eaten raw or roasted over the fire. Both are equally yummy! If ants don't get your taste buds watering, maybe you'd rather snack on a tarantula. There aren't exactly "junk food" options here in the jungle so one learns to adapt to the local treats.

—Joanna Jansma, Arimtap tribe, Asia-Pacific Region

# I only bow my knees to One

Anastasia, a strong Yembiyembi believer, was being pressured by her older sister to go to a witchdoctor for her bad knees. Anastasia responded:

“Older sister, your eyes are still closed to this talk so your thinking is in the dark. I do know a powerful Man. His power wins over any man on this ground. He made this body, and if He wants these two knees to come back He can do it. I will sit at

the feet of no witch doctor. I know a powerful Man Who has strength with no limits.”

— *Brooks and Nina Buser, Yembiyembi tribe, Papua New Guinea*



You can also learn to share about this powerful Man with unreached people groups: [canada.ntm.org/training](https://canada.ntm.org/training)

## KIDSQUIZ

**Taro** is the main food of the Akolet people of Papua New Guinea. It grows underground and when you dig it up, guess what it looks like? A big, fat, hairy potato! The inside is either white or light purple and tastes sort of like a potato too. So how do you think the Akolet people believe the first taro got here?

- A)** In ancient times there was no rain. Then the first rain fell and a new kind of plant sprouted up. This was the first taro.
  - B)** An old woman who lived in a cave ventured out to a new area of jungle and saw strange creatures she was afraid of. She beat them with a stick. Once dead, she buried them. Taro plants then sprouted there.
  - C)** A giant snake slithered along the entire Akolet tribal area and pooped out the first taro.
  - D)** Taro once walked the earth. They became afraid when they saw humans, buried themselves in the earth and began growing as plants.
- (No peeking! Answer at the bottom of page 12!)

— *Adam and Julie Martin, Akolet tribe, Papua New Guinea*



## Getting a head on the rice harvest

Each year the Red Karen people take part in a ceremony to ensure a good rice crop. Missionary Peter Bangcong shares the traditional story behind the ceremony, which enables him to understand the Red Karen culture better:

In the beginning there was just one Red Karen, and he was only a head. He lived in a house with his grandmother, and one day when his grandmother was outside the house, the house began to take him up to Heaven.

His grandmother grabbed a corner post to hold the house down, but she was left holding the one post while the rest of the house went up to Heaven. But as it went, the Red Karen said to his grandmother, “If you will remember me, I will bless your rice crop each year.”

So each year just before the harvest, the Red Karen people carve a post and put it up to celebrate his memory, in order to have his blessing on their rice crop.

—*Ian Fallis, Contributing Editor*



“If the day comes that we become too diluted by programs to be effective, lay us aside and raise up another group who will carry on the mandate.”

—Paul Fleming, Founder of NTM  
(Portion of a prayer)



The Patpatar way to say “window” is *matanakalanger*, which literally means “eye of the parrot.”  
— Aaron and Lori Luse,  
Patpatar tribe,  
Papua New Guinea

## \* pray

“When Jesus died, you died too,” missionary Adam Martin said. “When Jesus was raised, you were raised too.” One by one, 22 believers from **Papua New Guinea’s Akolet tribe** were baptized.

“The believers who had been baptized kept saying how happy and light-hearted they all felt,” wrote Adam’s wife, Julie, adding that it was “extremely different from any of the meaningless rituals or religious exercises they had practiced in the past with the sombre, heavy, fearful atmosphere.”

Today, please praise God for the people who stepped out in faith to be baptized, and pray for them as they face ridicule and discrimination for their choice.

Learn how you can pray weekly for needs around the world: [canada.ntm.org/prayer](http://canada.ntm.org/prayer)



CONNECT WITH...



### **Peter and Elaine Yoon**

**Children:** Dayne, Jean, Ian and Sean

**Field of Service:** Asia-Pacific

**Ministry:** Tribal Church Planting and Discipleship

**Sending Church:** Spring Church, Hong Kong

**Home Church:** GraceWay Church, South Korea

Peter was born in South Korea. His family moved to the US when he was 10. God directed Peter’s heart during university to pursue tribal missions as a life goal. Since then, Peter has been committed to lead his own family to become prepared as a ministry team to serve in a remote location.

Elaine was born and raised in Hong Kong. She attended a religious school and church, but came to the saving knowledge of the Gospel through chronological Bible teaching that Peter taught at a dorm Bible study at university in the US. After a year of prayer, Elaine was convicted of the Lord’s desire to reach the remotest tribes with the message of salvation through Christ. She committed her life to serve in tribal missions.

Now, 13 years later, Peter and Elaine and their four children are thankful that God has continued to give them the green light toward tribal church planting work.

[ntm.org/peter\\_yoon](http://ntm.org/peter_yoon)



## Help me have children!



“I’m heading up to the chief’s compound now,” missionary Dave McKee called to his wife. “The Kankuran is up there doing a ceremonial marriage with one of the women who is having trouble bearing children.”

The Kankuran is a costumed individual—this time the McKees’ friend Yaya—who is considered one of the mediators between the living and the dead for the Balanta people of Senegal. Protecting women and their infants is one of his many important functions.

The pregnant woman who had suffered several miscarriages was kneeling before her ancestral spirits and wearing a hat made of the same strips of bark as the Kankuran. After the ceremony, she will be considered a “wife” of this “good spirit.” With his powers, the Balantas believe, he will protect her and her unborn child. During the ceremony, teenage girls prostrate themselves for a washing of protection so that in the future they will have many children.

## I have something in my head.

Robert and I were sitting in class and I was feeling a little blue. I thought I’d perk myself up by cleverly using a French idiom we’d recently learned. As a rule of thumb, you always know something’s gone wrong when your teacher starts laughing and it wasn’t supposed to be funny. I had tried to say I was depressed by using the idiom which translates as “I have

a cockroach in my head.” And that would be depressing. Unfortunately, what I said was “I have a duck in my head.” It gave my teacher a good laugh and perked me up as well — just not in the way I’d anticipated.

—Robert and Amanda Kay,  
*Burkina Faso*



# Introducing Map Creator

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An aerial photograph of a village nestled in a valley. The landscape is characterized by rolling green hills and mountains, some of which are partially shrouded in mist or low clouds. The village consists of several small, simple houses with dark roofs, scattered across a grassy area. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, capturing a rural setting in a mountainous region.

# The Village that God Remembered

*by Cathy Drobnick*



An aerial photograph of a mountainous landscape. The foreground shows a small village with several traditional houses with thatched roofs. The middle ground is a valley with green fields and some trees. The background consists of rolling hills and mountains, some covered in green vegetation and others in lighter, grassy areas. The sky is overcast with light clouds.

### A Hidden Place

It is a green, wooded place. Lofty mountains surround and nestle the little village that enjoys sunshine and spring-like weather all year. Tree kangaroos hide among the branches of nearby saplings and opossum-like marsupials rummage through the lush, thick grasses on the forest floor.

Access to this beautiful place is by aircraft only.

One day, in 2002, God flew some strangers in for a visit.

They stood at the edge of the remote Dinangat village situated at 5,200 feet. They scrutinized the scene, wondering about the people who lived in the little community.



The people of the tribe, small of stature and shy by nature, wondered back about the visitors. *What do they want? Why are they here?*

They watched carefully to see what would happen next.

Introductions came first. The visitors were from New Tribes Mission. They had come to visit for a few hours. And they had some questions.

The NTM survey team listened to the answers the tribespeople gave and carefully took notes.

And then, too soon for the Dinangats, the NTM team left.

After their departure, the tribal leaders gathered to talk. The visit had stirred up old feelings. The Dinangat people had long heard of mission works that grew and thrived in other places. They had even heard that some tribes in villages around them had God's own words in their own language.

"We also must know what is true," the leaders agreed. So they decided to write a letter to New Tribes Mission, begging them to send missionaries to bring them God's Word.

The letter was received by NTM with care, prayer and a heart to meet the need. But sadly, there were not enough missionaries to send a team to every tribe that asked.

So the Dinangats waited, but no one came. The long wait made it seem clear to them: they were a people



forgotten in the darkness.

They could not know it then, but God had not forgotten. In fact, He was plotting good for the Dinangat people and glory for Himself.

During the NTM missionary training back in the USA, God was actively at work. It didn't take long for Gary and Esther Smith, Ralf and Elli Schlegel and Jeremiah and April Markley to feel certain that God was strengthening and uniting them into a team that would serve Him together — somewhere.

The three couples began to pray for God's specific guidance toward that place.

And, of course, God knew — just as He always had — exactly where it would be.

## Forgotten and Fearful

In January 2003, Jeremiah, Ralf and Gary made their first visit to the Dinangat tribe. The people welcomed them eagerly.

They were a quiet people, respectful and courteous, and yet a gloom seemed to hang over their lives and their village. Decades of waiting had worn old hopes thin. “We didn’t think anyone remembered,” the tribespeople told the three men.



photos by Ralf Schlegel

A government counsel repeated the Dinangat plea to Ralf, Jeremiah and Gary. “Everyone has forgotten us,” he translated for them. And the people nodded their agreement.

The NTM missionaries learned it had been more than 50 years since another mission group had visited the village. They had settled there

*They could not know it then,  
but God had not forgotten.*

briefly, leaving behind a new religion of practices — a confusing muddle of baptism, communion and taking offerings without clear understanding of why they were to do these things.

Through the years, the original teaching had aged and altered. The talk had been in the trade language, so even though a few people in the village had understood the *words*,

it seemed that no one had understood the *message*.

The Dinangats told the NTM missionaries that after awhile, this first mission group left and had, they felt, forgotten all about them.

The people knew they lived in darkness. Fresh in their minds was a recent sickness that killed one of the tribe and the resulting murder of



photo by David Uttley



The people knew they  
lived in darkness.

another in the tribe by family members who were convinced he had made their relative ill. The village that seemed peaceful at first glance knew a raging undercurrent of fear, hate and bondage.

The NTM missionary team asked questions about what the tribe now believed.

“Where did you come from?” they asked. “Who is God?”

And the people responded with sadness, “We don’t know.”

The early visits by Jeremiah, Gary and Ralf were just the beginning of years of careful culture study. From the beginning it was clear that spiritual darkness engulfed the village. But much was not clear.

A symbol of the religious confusion seemed to be the little church building situated prominently in the village. It had been recently constructed by the tribe from hand-planed bush materials. Money had been saved for many years to purchase the tin, nails

and paint for a proper building. They hoped this “sacred place” would appease the God their parents had learned about from the first religious group — the angry God they did not know, yet feared.

Here and there scattered Biblical words and fragments of Gospel songs turned up oddly in Dinangat conversation and daily life. But the words seemed disconnected from meaning.

Little children played in the mud singing *Jesus Loves Me* in the trade language — not understanding one word of what they sang. And their church-attending parents lived in fear that one misstep could result in evil spirits making them desperately sick, or in the horror of vengeful ancestors yelling at them from garden soil where they inhabited sweet potatoes.

Wandering the village, they believed, were spirits waiting to pounce on anyone who did not fear and appease them. Since they had heard that Jesus had died and risen, they included Him as one of those spirits — a spirit who insisted on church attendance, taking communion, baptism and giving offerings to keep God’s wrath from crashing down.

Yet, in all their efforts, they found no peace for their hearts. Out of fear, the Dinangat people painted their heads with a white chalky substance and ate a specific kind of banana to



photo by Gary Smith

*It had been a long wait  
for the Dinangats  
and there was much  
for God's grace to do.*

open their souls to the spirits to prove they were worthy and clean inside.

Despair ran deep. Life was a weary and fearful cycle. There were so many to appease; all the cruel spirits of their dead ancestors, and that angry God too. All-night dances around fires were a desperate effort to ward off evil. Then, to cover all the bases, the participants would gather hours later for religious

photo by Ralf Schlegel



photo by David Uttley

services in the little church building.

Their bewilderment and turmoil were desperate, but never past God's wisdom. He saw and remembered. And, in fact, through their struggles, God was steadily building hunger in Dinangat hearts for His truth.

### **Stirrings of the Light**

The missionaries saw increasingly how much the Dinangat people needed Him. In February 2003, God's Spirit tugged at the hearts of the Schlegels, Markleys and Smiths and the final decision was made to launch their team's ministry in the dark little village.

They strategized carefully and prayed earnestly. Moving in with the tribe would help build relationships. They would learn daily routines, and more importantly, they would listen to hearts.

In nurturing friendships, the missionaries would gradually grow comfortable with the language. The Dinangats' heart language must be

learned so that God's Word could be taught and absorbed at new levels. The team prayed that as the people heard God's truth in their very own language, the bright drama of redemption would finally unfold clearly for them.

The missionaries also prayed for God to nurture the essential seeds of Bible translation and literacy. There was an obvious urgency in getting God's Word translated and placed into tribal hands to be read and studied first-hand.

It had been a long wait for the Dinangats and there was much for God's grace to do. One month after deciding this village was God's place for them, the Markley, Smith and Schlegel families began building homes there.

Moving in and beginning the work was exciting. "We were thrilled to be bringing these people the truth of God's Word that would free them from the bondage and fear they lived in," Gary shares.

Spending quality time with the Dinangat people meant sitting with them in their homes. Building friendships happened easily while working with them in their gardens and helping them with projects. The missionaries loaned the people tools, attended their celebrations and ate with them.

Gary shares that the "eating with them" part can be challenging.





Sometimes it even involves choking down highly unusual foods. “But we do it — and the smiles always follow. Although we draw the line at eating spiders.”

The team has plugged along in the extreme challenges of Dinangat language study, averaging about three years of hard work to become fluent.

April Markley’s best language-learning times have happened when she heads high up on a mountain with her Dinangat friend for a day of working in the garden. April shares, “We speak exclusively in the Dinangat language. At the beginning, I would make a fool of myself acting out what I was trying to say. Let’s just say that

the motivation for figuring out how to use the language was very high, especially on those days!”

Her husband, Jeremiah, adds, “Learning the culture and language of the Dinangat people is the hardest thing I have ever done.” Many times during the process, he confesses, he nearly gave up. He even entertained thoughts of changing to a different ministry. But Jeremiah affirms that God was faithful to encourage him that this Dinangat project was *His* project and that His grace would be enough.

### **Bright New Beginnings**

It was the morning of January 28, 2008 and the mood in the village was

God had fully prepared them—they just knew that Jesus was the one!



photo by Ralf Schlegel



photo by Gary Smith

celebratory. Finally it had arrived — the day that the chronological Bible teaching was to begin.

Because of the tangle of religious confusion connected with the church building, it was decided these meetings would take place, not in the church building, but in a brand new setting: outside in the fresh, green beauty of God’s Creation.

Village culture dictated relaxed starting times. So the missionaries were shocked to arrive the first morning and see almost the entire village, already seated in readiness. And for nearly four months, this same eager crowd was waiting every morning to hear the teaching.

Hungry hearts were much in evidence. “It was pure joy to see the lights come on as the Holy Spirit revealed truth from God’s Word,” shares Gary, the main Bible teacher.

The anticipation intensified as the tribe heard and absorbed God’s story of redemption. They began to watch expectantly for the promised Redeemer. When the lesson about Jesus’ birth was finally taught, God had fully prepared them — they just *knew* that Jesus was *the One*!

**Esingke**, the much-respected village chief, had been a village witch doctor. After hearing the truth of God’s Word and coming to Christ, he confessed that his whole witch doctor routine



Photo by Jeremiah Markley



photo by David Uttley

was trickery to increase his influence. He admitted this to the whole tribe and began to take a strong stand against rituals and belief in ancestral spirits.

A particularly aggressive and critical woman named **Mesari** had lived in constant conflict in the tribe and had been fearful of the missionaries, believing they had special powers to see through her. After attending the chronological Bible teaching, she received Christ with eagerness and gave Him control of her life.

Mesari told the missionaries, “In the past, I lived bad. Many people died and we cried. But today I have hope!”

As months and years have passed, God’s grace has redeemed and changed many Dinangat people. The missionaries estimate that 80 percent to 90 percent of the people in the two villages that they have reached so far have turned from darkness to embrace the light of God’s Truth.

In time, the nine Bible teachers of the village met and discussed what to do with the church building they had built. Together, they decided: they would begin a project of change. As God had torn down the walls of sin in their village and allowed His grace to shine in, the believers would tear out all the walls of the building.

The believers now meet under this vivid illustration of God’s work — a roof with no walls.

*Change is brightening  
the once-dark village.*

### **Transforming Grace**

On Sunday morning, the conk shell blows three times to invite the people to worship. Come — and plan to stay awhile. The Sunday meeting will be three to four hours long.

There will be prayer. And singing. Maybe it will be an original Dinangat hymn. Listen carefully and you will hear it echoing through the forest and up the steep mountainsides:

*Our Father is here, the Holy Spirit  
is here,*

*We hear this talk from the Bible,  
Friends, all of us hear this talk.*

*We have new thinking now.*

*Lord, You come, and bring forth new  
thinking to us.*

The sermon will be preached, always by two Bible teachers. Afterward, believers will share prayer needs and offer joyful praise for prayers God has answered. The fellowship is rich — this Sunday worship encourages and builds up believers. Change is brightening the once-dark village.



Broken and abusive marriages have been healed. Husbands are learning to love and serve the wives who they once ridiculed and abused. **Lukas** is a shining example. In a culture where marriages are not highly valued, Lukas shows Christ's love by bringing gifts to his wife and children and by sitting with them at meetings. He doesn't run away to the jungle without them. And **Jaspa**, who used to beat his wife, now serves her humbly, protecting her and stooping to start fires and even to carry things for her.

The quality of life for children is dramatically different now. Where harsh beatings with sticks and stones were once the norm, parents have come to understand principles of

Biblical parenting. The sounds that now spill out of believing homes are songs of praise and the voices of parents reading to their children.

Literacy has swept the village. At this point, more than 100 people have completed the course. **Iteringke** shares, "I was in the first literacy class and I knew I could not do it by myself, so I asked God to open my thinking so I could learn to read and write. I thank God because I know it was Him Who helped me."

Teaching Dinangat people to read is important — because giving them God's Word in their own language is crucial. The diligent task of Bible translation progresses well. The Dinangats celebrate each portion of



photo by David Uttley



photos by Gary Smith

*...giving them God's word  
in their own language is crucial.*

Scripture that is finalized and printed. Jeremiah Markley and Ralf Schlegel are the primary translation team, but Ralf is quick to add, “Every adult on the team has been — or is — currently involved in one way or another in the Dinangit translation project.”

Currently, about 20 percent of the Dinangit New Testament is ready for printing, including portions of Matthew, Mark, John and almost the full books of Romans and Ephesians. “Lord willing,” Ralf says, “we will be finishing the New Testament in the next five or six years. It’s a joy beyond words when we get to hand out the freshly printed Bible portions.”

Although they see God powerfully

at work, the Schlegels, Markleys and Smiths do not want their ministry to be portrayed as a perfect ministry or as one without struggles. There are hard times, the missionaries share candidly.

“The hardest challenge is the same everywhere — it is struggling with my own flesh,” Gary writes.

“And I sometimes struggle with not feeling good enough for the job,” Ralf adds. “But God keeps reminding me that He has entrusted this task to me, so He also will enable me to do it.”

“My hardest challenge is the fact that we are strangers and foreigners — no matter how long we have been here. We are different. I don’t like that

feeling at all and it is a daily struggle for me,” Elli expresses.

“Although I have passed a certain level of language learning,” April shares, “there is still a lot lacking in my own ability to be able to communicate at a deeper level with the women. That is my biggest challenge.”

“Honestly,” Esther adds. “it’s hard to balance what is required to support the team with fulfilling the ministry God has given me right in our own home to our four children.”

So the encouragement to persevere — where does it come from? It comes from the close-up view of God’s work in Dinangat lives, the missionaries say.

There’s **Jinongke**, who used to be very confused about what was true, believing that his good works would save him. He believed that because he had been baptized and participated in communion and church services, he would go to Heaven. “Then the impossible happened,” Jinongke told the missionaries recently. “God’s Spirit turned me around. So now, I keep giving all the glory to God!”

Another believer, **Pol**, has also come to trust in Christ alone for his salvation. “When the missionaries taught the Bible, I realized I was on the road to the everlasting fire. I am a sinner. Back when I was in Satan’s clan, my village used to perform sorcery. Now Jesus is truly my Saviour

and I know that when I die, I will go to God.”

By God’s redeeming grace, the once-dark Dinangat village in the mountains is being transformed.

True, the ministry challenges are ongoing. The needs can feel overwhelming. And the obstacles are, at times, discouraging. But the missionary team shares this verse from the fourth chapter of

*The same power  
is mightily  
at work in  
the Dinangat  
church. They no  
longer wonder  
if they are  
forgotten.*



photo by Ralf Schlegel

300

Plant 300 new churches in Phase 1

2 Corinthians as the theme and goal of their ministry: *“God... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.”*

They can easily identify with those fragile clay jars, the missionaries say. And they are grateful that God’s power fills and fuels their team.

The same power is mightily at work in the Dinangat church. They no longer wonder if they are forgotten. They know the truth — that they are a people much beloved by God.

And God’s glory is on dazzling display as He brightens the darkness of the Dinangat people and assures them faithfully that He has *always* remembered them.



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“I went to Interface with questions and came home with answers. During grade 11, I was considering overseas missions as a career and had lots of questions. What does missions look like? How do tribal people live? What does it take to reach them? How does NTM actually do it? How could I fit into it all? And I got to see those answers for myself.” —Tyler Burgett, College Student



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