



IN OUR WORDS

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From the Director's Desk

It is with great pleasure as the new Executive Director to share with you our journey in this edition of In Our Own Words. I greet you with these words in **Ephesians 1:4, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. "**



Therefore, I acknowledge God's calling upon your life as you serve Him in different ways according to the gifting He has given you: some in administration, in the board, and in the field in remote areas. Many of you give finances and thousands all over the world are praying for BTA operations.

I pay tribute to the pioneers of BTA for capturing the vision of localizing Bible translation work. I honour what the Lord accomplished through David Gela, Steven Thomas and the many translators who served with them over the years. Many are still serving the Lord after 35 years while some have gone to be with the Lord.

I thank our international partners for standing by our side, for investing resources and providing technical training in order for scripture to be translated into our heart languages.

I appreciate the churches in PNG for supporting the language projects in the regions. An increase of support in the last five years is commendable. Let us work in renewed relationship through the person of Jesus Christ. Our deeper relationship with him will draw us together towards BTA's vision and mission.

I have used most part of this month to capture our plans for the next six months. A BTA leadership team is in place to lead with me and a new board to oversee us. Our focus for now is to audit all our programs and cut work plans for the next three years. I will visit many of you in the regions. I invite you to come on board to think, plan, fellowship and pray together for the cause of transformation in PNG.

My family greet you and pray for you.

Tony Kotauga - Executive Director

BTA WELCOMES NEW LEADER

The PNG Bible Translation Association (BTA) welcomed its third appointed Director, Mr Tony Kotauga, during its 35th Anniversary on 4 July 2015 at the SIL Centre in Ukarumpa, Eastern Highlands Province.

Reverend Jacob Harry anointed Tony Kotauga with oil, then founding Director, David Gela, prayed for him. Following the prayer of blessing and dedication David Gela along with his wife Sineina knelt down and washed the feet of their successors, signifying servant leadership. As a symbol of stepping into his new role, Tony and his family walked across the stage to be embraced by the Board of BTA. Then together with David and Sineina they walked to the opposite side of the stage to be welcomed by Wycliffe Global Alliance CEO Kirk Franklin indicating David's initiation into his new role as Pacific Islands Affairs Director. In turn, Tony prayed for David.

Members of the Cassowary Road United Church in Lae who released Tony in March 2014 ushered him into his leadership role with special music, dances and a prayer by Dr John Beaso. Likewise, the Gela family and village Church from Rikau, West New Britain led by David's cousin, David Ura, stood with their missionary to celebrate his long service with BTA and encourage him as he stepped into his new role in the wider Wycliffe Global Alliance. Freddy Boswell, outgoing SIL International Director, gave a speech in Solomon Islands Pidgin and Kirk Franklin (who grew up in PNG), gave advise to Tony in Tok Pisin.

Leaders of partner organizations in the Bible translation ministry came to witness this milestone in BTA history. From overseas were Kirk Franklin (Wycliffe Global Alliance CEO) and his wife Christine, Mark Taber (SIL Pacific Area Director), Barry Borneman (Wycliffe Australia Director) and his wife Marg, Freddy Boswell (outgoing SIL International Director), and David Nicholls (SIL Pacific Area Training Coordinator and Organisational Development Consultant). Leaders based in PNG were SIL PNG Director David Tute, and Wycliffe Associates PNG Program Managers, James and Denese Forkkio.



David Gela blesses Tony Kotauga (top) while Kirk Franklin (middle) and BTA board chairman (bottom) welcome him.

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35th Anniversary and Bi-Annual Conference

The PNG Bible Translation Association (BTA) conference takes place every two years. This year it was held at the SIL Centre in Ukarumpa, Eastern Highlands Province. Coinciding with BTA's 35th Anniversary and the installation of a new director the conference theme was "Celebrating God: Past, Present and Future" based on Psalm 90:1 "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." The full week started with an introduction night on Sunday, 28 June, and ended in a worship service the following Sunday, 5 July.

The people of Aiyura Valley welcomed the delegates in a traditional opening ceremony. All gathered at the entrance of the venue and the Gadsup people led the group into the Training Centre grounds with a *singsing* (traditional dance with singing and beating of kundu drums). Pastor Kenneth Norabate opened in prayer before the flag raising and singing of the National Anthem. Pastor Karo India, leader of the Aiyura Valley Pastors Fraternal, welcomed all participants. Then Obura Wanenara Member of Parliament, Honourable Mehrra Minne Kipefa, gave the opening speech. After which he went to the front door of the meeting hall and prayed before cutting the ribbon, signalling the official start of the conference. After the opening program MP Kipefa gave an encouraging talk as a fellow brother in Christ and pledged his support to the Bible translation work in this country.

From day one the outpouring of the Holy Spirit went beyond the boundary of a schedule. David Gela, the founding leader of BTA, brought the delegates back into the 35 year journey of this national translation organization recognizing and acknowledging that God had been BTA's help. Before asking for God's

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After the worshipful ceremony the celebration continued with a *mumu* (food cooked underground with heated stones). The community meal was contributed by the valley churches and prepared especially by the Obura people. SIL friends also brought food to share. About five hundred people gathered that day and there was plenty of food left. Speeches, dances, songs and giving



Top to bottom: Gadsup people dancing; Hon. Mehrra Minne Kipefa encourages BTA; Tony Kotauga and SIL Director David Tute sign renewal of partnership covenant witnessed by Kirk Franklin and Mark Taber.

blessing for the next 35 years there was an unplanned call for repentance. As David led in a corporate prayer of repentance individuals came forward to make confessions and to ask God's forgiveness. In another profound moment the Lord dipped us further into His cleansing by individually considering how we had grieved Him with words spoken against our leaders and each other. A symbolic foot washing ceremony went far into the night.

Kirk Franklin, Wycliffe Global Alliance President, shared God's word around the topic of friendship, wealth and poverty, and generosity in the Melanesian context. He also outlined Wycliffe's history in the Asia Pacific Region. Among the international guests, Mr John Watters, SIL Board Chairman, explained Vision 2025—starting a translation work in every language group that needs it by 2025—a vision that is only made possible by a miracle-working God; Mark Taber, SIL Pacific Area Director, encouraged BTA in the work in the Pacific Area; Barry Borneman, Wycliffe Australia Director, shared about Wycliffe Australia's long standing partnership with BTA; John Rentz, Wycliffe New Zealand Associate Director, stressed the positive impact the BTA team had on the people of New Zealand when it toured to say "thank you" to the Islanders who first brought the gospel of salvation to PNG; Tim Husk representing the leadership of SIL PNG shared how they are seeking God's plan as they work with the churches, communities and BTA ; and James Forkkio, Wycliffe Associate PNG Director, talked about supporting the Bible translation work in PNG.

The business meetings covered the usual motions concerning proceedings in BTA such as membership, election of the Board, constitution and by-laws, among others. Throughout the program BTA workers received recognition for their outstanding service and lasting contributions in translating scripture and years of service from 10 years or more. Glory to God who led us and whose presence was evident throughout the conference. ✦



of presents continued throughout the afternoon and into the evening.

The day was set aside for celebration, remembering all God has done in and through BTA over the past 35 years and rejoicing in anticipation of all he will continue to do under the godly leadership of BTA's new director Tony Kotauga. ✦

In Our Words is the official BTA newsletter. Beginning this issue it will be a monthly publication. Our goal is to inform our ministry partners, the church, and the public about what we do. Visit our web page: www.pngbta.org