

they will See and Understand

ISAIAH 52:15; ROMANS 15:21

JAN 2019 - HARMATTAN SEASON IN SIERRA LEONE

Greetings from Sierra Leone! It feels great to be back, just in time for the season that brings the desert sands on the wind, leaving a layer of red dust on every surface, everyday. We are embracing the “honeymoon” stage of our return for another term. The familiar sights, smells, tastes, and sounds are comforting... though not always comfortable. The rice is delicious, as are the reunions with friends and colleagues. It recently occurred to us that we have lived in our Makeni house longer than any other since our marriage. This is a comfort when so much still seems foreign.

DISPLACED BUT HOME

BY RUTHIE WAGNER



Elijah often spends quiet time reading and singing on the front veranda

As a missionary kid, I know that the foreign, displaced feeling never goes away no matter where I am, so we are trying to embrace the differences and enjoy the small comforts of familiarity. The kids are also going through this as they recognize neglected toys we had left here, people, places, roads, senses, etc. It’s disorienting when something feels familiar and foreign at the same time. Isaiah (4yo) keeps saying that “it just feels like I’m still in America” while Elijah (6yo) frequently comments on things he likes and dislikes from both places. It only took a few hours for him to jump into playing in the neighborhood. Kids play and squabble in every culture, even using different languages to communicate, and our kids are finding themselves among friends—especially when there’s a soccer ball. They still are getting used to the fact that any toy left out on the front verandah is at risk of being stolen.



WHO WE ARE

The Wagner Family is serving with Lutheran Bible Translators in

Sierra Leone, working alongside the Themne people in Translation and Scripture Use!

Making God’s Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts. (LBT’s Mission)

TIMELINE

- NOV- Return to Sierra Leone! 9th Anniv.
- DEC on Nov 21st; Josiah turns three on
- 2018 Dec 21st and Josh’s bd on Dec 24th
- DEC Meetings at Bible Society in
- 2018 Freetown, settling and greeting, Christmas!
- JAN- Normal routines! Translation and
- JUNE Scripture Use work, Josh studying,
- 2019 kids homeschooling.
- MAR LBT Supervisor and video team in
- Sierra Leone
- JUNE- Josh in UK for 3 weeks for his MA
- JULY program; Elijah’s 7th bd on June 21st; Isaiah’s 5th bd on July 9th.

TAKE ACTION

ADVOCATE by inviting friends to join our “Wagner Updates” group on *Facebook!*

[facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)

GIVE to “Wagner Ministry” online or by mailing a check. Please contact us if you’d like to set up automatic giving.

PRAISE for a smooth trip back to Sierra Leone with all our bags and a joyful reuniting with friends and colleagues.

PRAY for the Themne translation project and Scripture Use efforts.

CONTACT/SUPPORT

- ✉ Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org
- [facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagnerupdates)
- 📞 **GOOGLE VOICE:** 612.208.7680 (text anytime!)
- 🏠 LBT will forward “Wagner” mail to us.

Lutheran Bible Translators
 800.532.4253
www.lbt.org/give
 PO Box 789
 Concordia, MO 64020
 Designate “Wagner Ministry”

If you are new to Wagner Updates, please introduce yourself to us! Also, please contact us if you have any questions about our ministry, how you can be involved, how you can pray in more detail, or how you can support us financially.



“Opothu! Opothu!” meaning, “White person! White person!” plays like a broken record day after day. It’s an agonizing reminder that even with our best attempts of speaking Themne and Krio and dressing to match our peers, we are beacons. We can’t be missed. But for the first time in our five years, I heard a response to this loud calling from a young boy, a friend of

Elijah’s: “Eh! Not for call him opothu. His name Elijah!” I could hardly believe my ears. To me this represented a change toward acceptance. Elijah’s friend saw him, beyond his glowing skin, and chose to defend his individuality. I heard a defense of Elijah’s identity in the crowd of kids. My mama heart took a lot of comfort from that.

Most of the time being a beacon is annoying. It prevents me from wanting to go to the crowded market, to walk around the neighborhood, to be free in conversation at the fear of being misunderstood or manipulated. Everyone wants to be our friend for many reasons, many of which we find exhausting or oppressive. But there are times when being a beacon is a blessed part of our call and identity. People are curious about why we live here, have our children here, speak their languages, eat their food, walk their roads. It’s because we value them, their identities, their languages, their culture—and God does, too. We’ve been told many times



that our advocacy of local language helps people value their language and understand that God hears and speaks their language.

- » Please pray that we grow in our speaking abilities. We have been studying Themne and Krio for a long time, and the challenge of speaking well is grueling. Pray that in spite of our stumbling and stuttering, our relationships and love for our neighbors will grow.
- » Please pray for our work with the Themne translation project, Scripture Use, and Josh's studies in Leadership. We hit the ground running.
- » Please pray for the kids' nanny and teacher, Hannah Brown, who makes so much possible for our family.
- » Please pray that our kids will fit in where they can, while also being a beacon lit by the love of Jesus.
- » Please pray for our security guard and his wife, who helps in our home. They lost a father and their five-year-old daughter, who was Isaiah's best friend here. Depths of friendships are displayed in times of joy and grief. Unfortunately grief has come in waves and we've shed many tears for and with them. May God give them peace as only He can. Pray as we walk alongside them and other friends here.



May he also give you wisdom and peace in whatever time of life this finds you. He cares for you.

♥ *Josh & Ruthie Wagner*

Elijah (6.5), Isaiah (4.5), Josiah (3), & Elizabeth (1)

A GLIMPSE OF OUR DAYS UPDATE FROM THE WAGNER KIDS



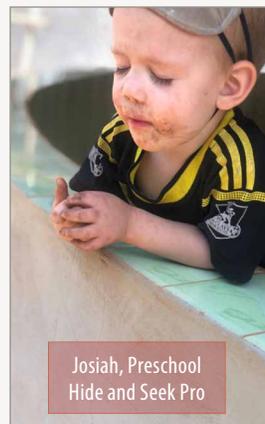
Elijah, 1st grade
Bookworm



Isaiah, PreK
Full of Questions



Playing with
Neighbor Kids



Josiah, Preschool
Hide and Seek Pro



Lizzie
Walking Mischief