



2023 Year in Review



Brian and Donna Renes

Moments, memories – a year in review

At times, milestone events pass quietly. That happened in 2023. Our family lived in Chiapas, Mexico, for several years, settling in to get to know people and learn the Tojolabal language. Those years were great years that molded us and gave us life-long friendships. At that time, the church leaders decided not to support and be involved in the translation of the Bible into their language, so Donna, the girls, and I returned to the U.S. and I began supporting Bible translation work regional and then later globally. More than 10 years after our departure, some Tojolabal church leaders decided to initiate a translation project into their language. So they did. Now, 15 years later, the project has been completed.

The entire Bible has been translated into Tojolabal.



Above left: An older Tojolabal woman (who was our neighbor); above left: Eli—the main translator at the end, and best overall, with her daughter.

There was no celebration even though it was the end of years of effort by a dedicated team of translators. The final members quietly did an electronic send of their completed project to the publisher. The layout experts have been putting the Tojolabal text into a layout that will turn into a PDF file. That file will be sent to South Korea for publishing. The printing and binding of the books will happen there. After the production is completed, hundreds and hundreds of boxes of Tojolabal Bibles will be put into a shipping container for their journey across the Pacific

Ocean. That cargo ship will arrive in a Mexican port where it will go through customs, be loaded onto trucks, and shipped to a warehouse in Mexico City.

All the while, plans will be in place for a celebration—a dedication of the Bible in Tojolabal.



Team working in 2007 (above left) and 2015 (above right)

So even though the finishing of the project passed in 2023 without many people noticing, the various dedications that will take place will be historic events that will draw Tojolabals together from far and wide. The news will go out and some will travel for hours and hours to be at the dedication. There will be singing. The music will be heard from afar. There will be testimonies of God's faithfulness to the team and providing what they needed to finish the project. The Bible Society will talk about the ministry of Bible translation and the importance of God's Word being available in all the languages of Mexico.

Then a solemn moment will come.

The singing will stop. The crowd gathered will be silent.

The church will stand in reverence. The moment is holy.

Each will turn to the back of the crowd and watch a processional—a few chosen to carry a copy of the Bible in Tojolabal before those who are gathered. Often an older leader will carry the copy and pass that copy to a younger person after reaching the altar. At that moment, all attention is turned to what will be said and shared. Many will be emotional. Earnest prayers for a blessing on what they hold in their hands will be offered, trusting that God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit will reach people's hearts. History will be made for the Tojolabals on that day.

Little by little the quiet will turn to rejoicing, singing, and praising. Boxes will be opened and the people who have traveled from afar will approach the altar to receive a copy of the Bible in their language.

Without a doubt, your support and prayers have and will make all this happen.



Above left: Dedication of the book of Ruth some years back; above right: Team working in 2018

Uplift the people and plans for 2024. This year, another language in Chiapas will have the full Bible.

Final comments: For the Tojolabal church the Bible will also be available to everyone on their phone, along with a narration of the New Testament. Of the 7,000 languages from around the world, Tojolabal will be nearly the 800th language group to have a full Bible.

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