

Spreading the Gospel Worldwide

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Ethiopian Lutheran school children with Bible storybooks

As a Lutheran woman, how many times have you used a child's Bible storybook? Perhaps you had a book about Jesus you loved as a child, or maybe you have sweet memories of reading Bible stories to your own children as you tucked them into bed. Maybe you've been a Sunday School or Lutheran day school teacher, and you've used Bible storybooks to teach your young charges the faith.

However, countless women around the globe have never been so fortunate. To many, a Bible storybook is an unaffordable luxury or isn't available in their language at all.

Through an LWML Mission Grant to the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF), this situation is changing! At the 2017 convention, delegates voted to provide \$100,000 to LHF for translating, publishing, and distributing Lutheran Bible storybooks for children and families worldwide.

"It's difficult to express the enormous impact this Mission Grant will have on spreading the Gospel," reflected LHF's executive director, Rev. Matthew Heise. "We know that Scripture tells us to raise up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it. LHF is deeply thankful to the LWML that, with this Mission Grant, literally tens of thousands of

children will be able to read and learn about their Savior, Jesus."

One of the first storybooks is *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, a colorfully-illustrated book of 60 Old and New Testament stories. It has been recently translated into the Farsi language, spoken in Iran. Although it's very difficult to get Christian materials into Iran, "God has a way of opening doors for His children," Rev. Heise shared.

In 2015, more than a million refugees crossed into Europe, including over 100,000 immigrants from Iran. When they settled in countries like Germany and Denmark, Lutheran churches and missionaries saw a great opportunity to introduce those living in the darkness of Islam to the light of Jesus Christ.

"The biggest challenge is the language," explained Rev. Hugo Gevers, a Lutheran pastor in Leipzig, Germany. "How do you teach people who don't know your language at all?" Once the 5,000+ copies of book are printed, they will be given free of charge to the Farsi-speaking families.

"What we've seen with this book, time and again, is that we translate and publish the book mainly for children," reflected Rev. Heise. "But what we didn't expect is how many adults would pick up this little book and start to read, and how it would lead to them asking more questions about who this Jesus is."

In the coming months, LHF will continue to translate several more publications for new and growing Lutheran churches in Africa, Asia, and Europe. For many recipients — most of whom come from Muslim, Buddhist, or atheist backgrounds — the stories of God's love bring peace and comfort.



David (right) and Rev. Hugo Gevers

This has proven true for David, LHF's lead Farsi translator of *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*. David grew up in a Muslim family in Iran, but after fleeing to Germany a few years ago, God led him to Rev. Gevers in Leipzig.

"I think of when Jesus was with his followers, and they said, 'Hey Jesus, your mother is outside.' But Jesus told them, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!'" David said. "Now I'm here in Germany. I have no family here. But my pastor is my father, and all who read this book and believe, they are my brothers and my sisters." Q