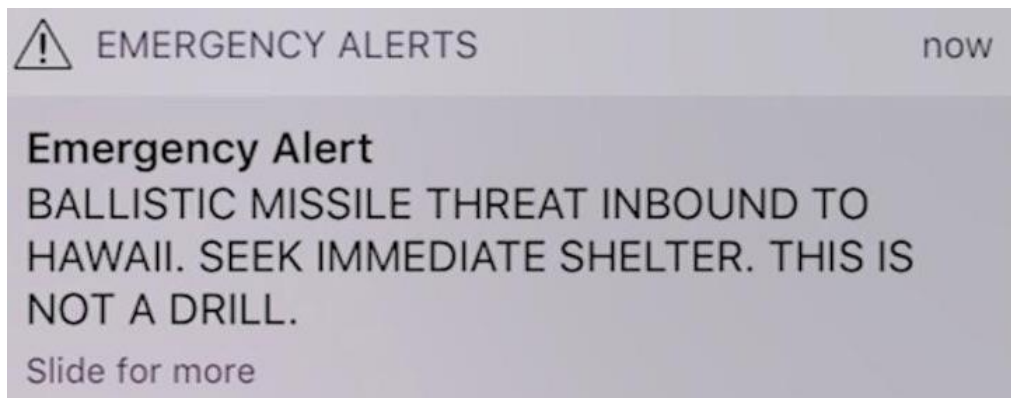


## 2018 in retrospect

2018 has come and just about left us. I won't send this until it's officially January. A lot can happen in a short time, as this year has shown us. There was a royal wedding, a US supreme-court justice appointed, the possibility of election engineering by hackers the world over, the death of two famous nonagenarians, George H.W. Bush and Billy Graham, a French victory in the World Cup, and there was a rare Triple Crown winner. There was the total economic collapse of Venezuela, Latin America's once-richest nation. Some economists predict that inflation in Venezuela will reach one million percent in 2019. Pray for this great nation. It is being abused by its own government.

There was massive destruction and loss of life in California due to fires and floods; there were major hurricanes throughout the southeast US, the murder of a Saudi journalist, the transferring of the US embassy in Israel from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, the ancient capital.

For our daughter, Amalia, and her family, tragedy lurked close by. In January all cell phones in Hawaii received an emergency alert which warned:



Nan and I were visiting the Big Island at the time. I scanned this message from my phone. The tranquility of the islands was shattered by this stark announcement. Nancy, Amalia and the granddaughters Eden and Aila, were working on breakfast, and Kyle and I were at a men's Bible study. Pretty much everyone decided that if it was the real thing, there was nothing we could do about it. So we just went ahead with what we were doing.

I thought back to the bomb drills we used to have in elementary school. That was 60 years ago! The potential for nuclear war is as scary now as it was back then in the middle of the cold war. Fortunately, the cell-phone alert was overturned within

twenty minutes of our hearing it announced. The warning ended up being human error. Oops!

Later in the year, Amalia's family had to deal with two hurricanes and then the eruption of Mt. Kilauea. Lava flowed to within three miles of their home and farm. Many of their friends lost everything. Their church became a central rescue operation. Back home on the mainland, things weren't quite so hostile, and we managed to stay occupied. I taught two classes in 2018, one each semester: Introduction to Phonology and Discourse Analysis. These are both interests of mine from my Ohio State days. And both courses have relevance for Bible translation.

This year we had students and profs from Mexico, El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, and the US. (the two guys with hats on).



In June we celebrated Nancy's mother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her daughters (Nancy plus Nancy's two sisters) their husbands, great-grandma's grandchildren (and their spouses—except two), and great grandchildren were all there; "there" being the North Carolina coast (Carolina Beach). Less than three months later the beach and town were laid waste by hurricane Florence. Indeed, North Carolina set a record in rainfall for 2018. It was a wet, green year for us weather-wise. We've even had 8 inches of snow already this season. That's a good bit for central North Carolina. This is the South, after all.



Great Grandma Hinerman and five of eight great grandchildren. L-R, Jacob, Eden, Great Grandma, Aila, Lucas and Nadia.

Yury, Elisa's husband, became a US citizen in 2018. Here the kids are helping him study his English.



So what are we looking at for 2019? Nan and I will both celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> high-school reunions. We'll also celebrate 42 years of working with Wycliffe and 44 years of marriage.

In February I am scheduled to teach a course called CLAVE (Applied Linguistics Course for Minority-Language Speakers). This will take place in Huánuco, a Peruvian town nestled in the Andes.

Usually I teach classes to college students and grads who are learning skills for engaging with people of other languages and cultures. We introduce students to the analysis of unwritten languages, and the skills needed to live and learn in a (usually) rural context. Their purpose is to be equipped for cross-cultural ministry, particularly Bible translation, literacy work and language development. But every once in a while, we sponsor training directly for indigenous people. Nan and I have done this four times before in South America (after having lived for 19 years in Guatemala, working with just such people).

This is a special treat for us. These are Indian students (Indian in the sense of being indigenous (historically “native”) to the areas where they live). Some of the classes have the same titles—Phonology, Grammar, Language Development—but these people live in a bilingual world, struggling with decisions concerning their fatherland and the promotion and maintenance of their mother tongue. They see us as support to their hopes and plans for their tribal future. And it is our privilege to train and help them.

Our CLAVE students are usually pastors, Bible translators and schoolteachers. They are key leaders in their communities, and they are people helping to decide what language will be spoken now and in the future in the homes and trails, institutions, churches, plazas and in daily conversations. This is important to us since such situations create a context where native-language Bible reading becomes a vital key to Christian growth and language maintenance.





This is our friend and colleague Byron. He hales from Comitancillo, the village where our family lived during most of our time in Guatemala. He was a student of mine in the first CLAVE back in 2006 in Peru. He has since taught with me in Guatemala, Colombia and a second time in Peru. He has a special knack for taking what he learns and putting it on display as a publication, a literacy class, a pep talk to teachers, a sermon topic, a radio program, or lots of other creative ways. He's extremely good with technology. He handles all the computer stuff in a dictionary project we are working on. Nan and I hope to get to Guatemala in 2019 to visit our old stomping grounds and to help encourage the Old Testament translation team and the promotion of literacy and Scripture use.

I plan to take on a writing / research project during 2019. I hope it will become a history of writing among the Mam people. Modern day Mam are descended from the Maya, the group popularized in Mel Gibson's Apocalypto. The Maya wrote in hieroglyphics over two thousand years ago up until the Spanish invasion. Reading was limited to the nation's elite. In the mid-1600's Catholic missionaries wrote Mam of a sort. They wrote it down so that new missionaries could learn to speak the language in order to teach the catechism and recite the Mass. There exist handwritten catechisms, but these, too, were for outsiders, and not intended for the Mam themselves. In the early 1900's Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Guatemala and began learning Mam in order to translate the Bible. For the first time, Mam was written for the masses (most of whom, at that time, unfortunately, were illiterate). So Bible translation, literacy, schools, and church outreach were part of the strategy for missions in Guatemala for well over 100 years. The first SIL members arrived in Guatemala in 1952, alphabets (including Mam) were suggested, tested and amended and literacy in the native language was seen as an important step toward full literacy in both Mam and Spanish. Nan and I arrived in Guatemala in 1979 and moved to the Mam area five months later, when Elisa was just 3 months old. The politics of writing systems became a big issue and often people who wrote in Mayan languages were considered part of the leftist enemies of the state. I was summoned to appear before the Colonel of the Guatemalan army in his headquarters to explain the Mam books we had published and to affirm that they were not nefarious, or compromising in any way.

Eventually, and not without rancor, the modern alphabets have been established and promoted. At this point in the life of the language, some people, especially children, read fluently. Literacy days and contests are held as people line up to read publicly. Mam is spoken freely and proudly, and Mam grammar is studied in local schools. Nowadays, Mam is "rapped" online and spoken and sung on radio programs—available on the web.

This history-of-literacy book means a lot to the Mam and it will help them to establish the importance and value of their language and its place in the larger context of written languages the world over. This is an important history. It is the

story on many levels of the Word becoming flesh. And outreach through Bible translation, literacy and language development are still keys to Mam life and understanding of the Gospel. It is truly and legitimately Good News for all.



Some of the grads in a local church reading program. Byron (far right) sees literacy as a major support to Bible translation, while providing reading skills in both Mam and Spanish. He also consults on the Mam Old Testament translation project.

Nancy and I are the grandparents of six. Elisa and Yury live nearby with their kids, 9-year-old twins Jacob and Lucas, and Nadia, 6. Amalia and Kyle have an organic farm in Hawaii with daughters Eden (8) and Aila (4). Isaac and Elizabeth live in Atlanta with daughter, JoJo (20 months). We love being grandparents, if you haven't sensed it.

Thanks so much for standing with us in this ministry. Some of you have been with us for the full 42 years. Thank you and may God increase your vision for Him and give you a great 2019.

A number of you have asked about my health. It's pretty good. It is confirmed that I have parkinson's, but the case seems pretty calm for now. I have a wide range of symptoms, but they are endurable. Fellow sufferer, Dave Toth, a former wrestler at Ashland U (where I ran track) has turned me on to bicycling. Since summer I've ridden for an hour a day either on bike trails or on a stationary bike at the gym. I miss less than one day out of ten (except Sunday). Many parkinson's patients have found biking to be especially helpful. Dave and I (and his sister) are planning a long ride in the Rockies this summer. There will be some 3,000 riders, all of whom have been affected by parkinson's.



I would be foolish to leave Nancy out of this update. She handles the books, the homestead, the details and somewhat of a maverick husband, keeping all the plates spinning at the same time. She is my best friend and collaborator. All that and she can spell, too. Just so you know, I am not going bald. My hair is just getting wispy.

Blessings to you all in 2019. We pray for all of you.

Wes and Nancy Collins  
Wycliffe Bible Translators