

## 2014 in Retrospect

Dear and good friends,

Warmest greetings to you from Wake Forest, North Carolina, our new home away from home. We've been here a little over a year.

2014 was a busy year for the world, and for most of us. Russia seems intent on restoring its lost empire. Malaysian Airlines flight 370 simply disappeared back in March, perhaps due to foul play. The search and conspiracy theories continue. Boko Haram and ISIS have been condemned for the abuse of Islamic girls and women, and everyone else who thinks differently than they do.

Incredibly, Sony Pictures was bullied into not releasing a spoof on North Korean life and leadership, thus virtually guaranteeing that pretty much anyone who cares to, will now watch the movie. The scary part of this is that no one had any inkling that North Korea had the wherewithal to pull something like this off. Indeed, they may be basking in the limelight of dirty work done elsewhere.

Time Magazine's "Person of the Year" was awarded to the Ebola fighters, the doctors, nurses, counselors, ambulance drivers and everyone else who tirelessly put themselves at risk for the sake of others in Western Africa and even here in the States.

Closer to home, race relations again erupted as a major divisive issue in the US. Certainly our country has come a long way since the first civil rights legislation, but we have a long way yet to go as evidenced in Ferguson and throughout the country.

While just 90 miles away from the mainland, relations with Cuba have been upgraded (though not resolved) at the stroke of a pen. Cuba and the Dominican Republic are the only two Spanish-speaking nations that have never sent a student to CILTA in Lima. Perhaps even this will change soon.



Much further from home, the European Space Agency landed a research module on a tiny comet. I once asked a NASA scientist how they could dock rockets millions of miles from earth. He said, "It's really very simple. All you do is determine where the spacecraft is, calculate where it should be, and adjust for the difference."

Had I only known.

It was a busy year for Nancy and me as well.

It started in early January, in Minneapolis, of all places. I presented a paper on Mam grammar at the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA). The meetings were set up by some really smart people. How 28 degrees below zero sneaked past the planners is beyond me. It's true, the meetings were indoors, but you had to go outside to get inside. Even the Canadians complained.



After warming up back in North Carolina, the family, packed off to rural Costa Rica for the wedding of our precious son, Isaac, and his dear betrothed, Elizabeth. Both immediate families were there. This was called a destination wedding—where getting there is half the fun. It was a beautiful site—Costa Rican jungle replete with howler monkeys—right on the Pacific, which you can see here in the background.

In March and May I had two separate trips to Venezuela where I had the chance to work with a colleague and with speakers of minority languages—9 languages in all. These meetings were set up to help people think about the value of their language. Did they want to rescue their native tongue from the predations of the monster languages like Spanish and Portuguese, or did they prefer to let it slowly melt away? We have found strong local support for keeping these languages going. So we work with local leaders on plans, surveys, strategies, events and publications to try to encourage people to maintain language use and to promote native language literacy. This isn't just an academic exercise. While being similar to all other languages in significant ways, each language is also different and presents a separate version of what it means to be an image bearer of God, our Creator. It is also the best vehicle

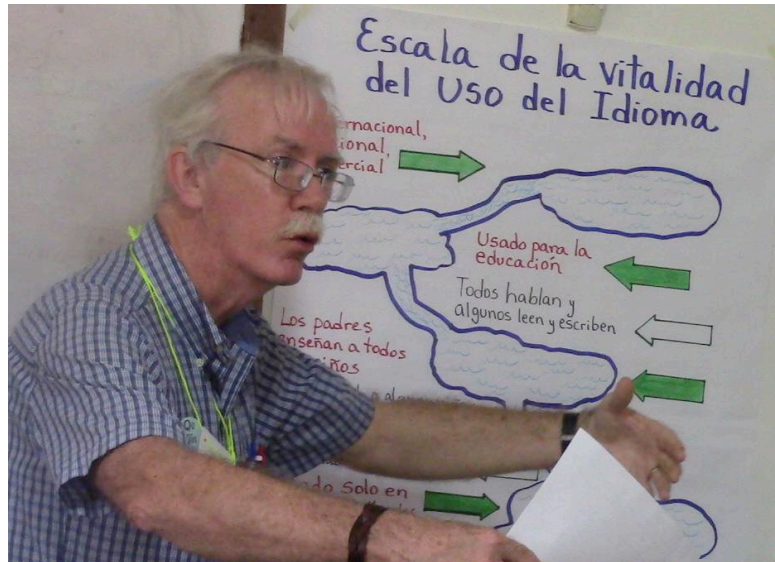
through which people come to understand deep truths about life and God and His love for speakers of all languages.

In mid-May, Nan and I left for Lima, Peru where I teach linguistics at a local university. Our students are all taking classes because they want to work in literacy, community development and Bible translation, across cultures. We've been doing this pretty much yearly since 2006.

As I've mentioned before, our work has changed its focus over the years. In Guatemala, Nan and I were doers. I worked on language, literacy and translation, while Nan ran a clinic and home-schooled the kids (plus did dozens of

other things). The New Testament was published in 1999 and I went back to school in 2000 in order to upgrade my teaching content and skills, while Nan worked as a nurse and administrator to keep the three kids and me in school. She is an amazing person...and a great nurse.

Since finishing school, I've been teaching and providing administration to a number of CILTA and CLAVE programs (These are linguistic programs aimed at Latinos and Indians respectively.). These programs are now largely administered by Latin Americans, and I spend most of my time teaching, preparing courses and writing. One of the things we're trying to do is put a lot of our training into modules and digitized format that can be used by other instructors as the present crop of professors ages. I'd like to be better at computers than I am, but I'm grateful to have a lot of good computer people in SIL that know how to do such things.



I made two trips to Dallas this year for meetings related to the SIL training that goes on in the Americas. There is a lot of coordination involved in having these courses sponsored by local organizations, in getting details resolved (like room,



board, and travel), finding the right faculty, materials and staff, dealing with the budget, and mentoring new instructors and field workers.

I also made two trips back to Guatemala during 2014. I was able to sit in on meetings with the Old Testament translation group. I was impressed with the group's skills and perseverance. While I was there, they translated from 1 Kings the details of the temple construction and its implements. They put this into normal-sounding Mam, and they are excited about having the Old Testament available to them to go along with the New Testament. God's Word in native languages is a powerful force. This continues to be a work in progress and I'm looking forward to spending some time with them in the year ahead. The picture above is of the Mam translators and literacy workers. They are doing a wonderful job.

The year ended well for us. Elisa and Yury's daughter, Nadia, had surgery to remove a cyst that she was born with right over her eye. She has recovered well and is as spunky as ever. The surgery required a general anesthetic, which is a big deal to the parents and grandparents of little ones. A number of you asked for an update. Thanks.

The twins are well and growing. Elisa homeschools them for this, their kindergarten year. It's amazing to watch young ones learn to read. As a reminder, Nan homeschooled our three kids for five years.

Across the country and half an ocean away, Amalia gave birth on December 17 to Aila (pronounced EYE-luh) Kaye. Kaye is the middle name of both grandmas. Aila is happily mothered by her big sister, Eden. Amalia, Kyle and girls are well and we plan to visit them all soon.

So what's ahead for 2015? Certainly lots will happen. But maybe not in Congress, where both the Senate and House have gone Republican with midterm elections, while the President is digging in his feet. A big question for Clevelanders (I only LIVE in North Carolina, but I'm still a Clevelander) which seems to be losing some steam is whether the return of LeBron James will bring Cleveland a championship.

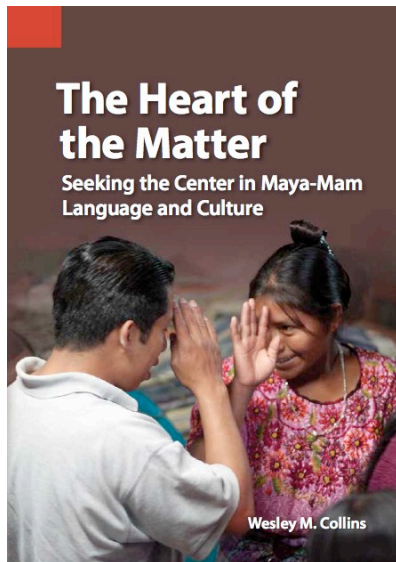
There are some major anniversaries coming up. 2015 will mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. It will also mark 50 years since Martin Luther King's march in Selma. 2015 is also Nan and my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary—June 20. Thirty-eight of those years have been as members of Wycliffe. And the 2015 NFL season will end with the 50<sup>th</sup> Super Bowl.

As I write this, another day that looms large is this coming Monday, the college football national championship game, featuring the much-loved Buckeyes. There are a few people reading this in Alabama, and a few more in the Northwest, but the grand majority are in Ohio. So I guess I can't be faulted with humoring the majority.



Go Bucks!

Another project that I thought would be completed last year, but which is still hanging around, is the publication of my book on Mam language and culture. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We even have a lovely cover and foreword, but we're still tending to some details. I fully expect good news fairly soon—of course I said that last year. The man on the cover is our dear friend and colleague, Byron. The greeting—hands to forehead and a slight bow—is an important Mam cultural practice.



As we look to the year ahead, we are very grateful to you who support us with your gifts and prayers and interest. We spend more time in the US than we did back in the day. But the goals are the same: to help provide the skills and tools for speakers of minority languages so they can maintain their languages in the face of globalization and so they can understand in their own language that God cares for them and has provided a way to reach Him through Christ. This is indeed Good News, no matter what language you speak.



The grandkids: Jacob Wesley, Nadia Elise, Lucas Vincent. Aila Kaye and Eden Joy.

We enjoy hearing from you and praying for you all. Please keep in touch. I know it has been a rough year for many of you health-wise and otherwise. Prayer pleases God. No matter how He answers, we believe that He is good.

God's best to you all, and may 2015 be your best year ever.

Wes and Nancy Collins

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