2025

Wycliffe

IN OTHER WORDS

INSIDE

In their hands

Around the world, local churches are leading the work of Bible translation. It's a vital way for people to hear God speak in the language of their hearts—and it opens the door to deeper engagement with His Word. At Wycliffe Canada, we're honoured to come alongside local churches and communities in this important work.

In this issue, we celebrate a landmark event in Peru: the dedication of the complete Bible in Eastern Apurímac Quechua. It's the culmination of 20 years of faithful work and patient waiting. We also highlight the growing movement toward local church leadership in Bible translation—and how translation has evolved since Wycliffe was founded more than 80 years ago. Finally, we travel to South Africa and Namibia, where a group of young Canadians is deeply moved by the way diverse language communities engage with Scripture.

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Credits: Background photos by Natasha Ramirez (pages 2 & 6), Ruth Richert (page 11), and Helen van der Walt (page 12).

Design by Kari Miedema

Jesus also speaks my language

THE EASTERN APURÍMAC QUECHUA BIBLE CELEBRATION IN PERU

All Peru stories and article photos by Ruth Richert

AIDIA staff members Dina Rojas (holding Bible) and Shendy Quispe (wearing pink cloak) celebrate the Bible dedication alongside members of the Chuquibambilla congregation.

Thin slices of tripe nestle coyly between potatoes and chunks of freshly-butchered beef in the clear broth. It's 8 a.m. and the Eastern Apurímac Quechua Bible dedication is beginning with steaming bowls of soup and coarse bread. Every celebration needs food—and this one has been a long time coming.

Women clad in cardigans and thick skirts bustle around the outdoor kitchen, stoking the fire and making sure every visitor is served. It's the rooftop of a church in Chuquibambilla, a town in Peru's Apurímac province. At 3,320 metres, the town sits high enough for foreign visitors to feel the altitude. But the small groups clustered under the rooftop tarpaulin have come from communities perched even higher on the surrounding mountainsides. Many are subsistence farmers, eking out a living from the fragile soil. Most don't have the luxury of a mule, let alone a car—so they've made the long trek to Chuquibambilla on foot.

Two decades in the making

The mealtime calm gives way to a flurry of activity as people rush to change into their best clothes. They funnel into the church hall one floor below, arranging themselves in community groups easily identifiable by their co-ordinated outfits. Anticipation hums in the air. One woman hastily glues the last brightly coloured ribbons to her skirt as her children look on.

The sudden bustle belies just how long they've waited for this day. Though translation work was completed by AIDIA—Wycliffe's Bible translation partner in Peru—in 2021, printing delays added four long years to the timeline. Altogether, it has taken two decades to reach this dedication day. The journey began in 2004 with a language survey—an assessment of how a language is used, who speaks it and whether a Bible translation is needed.

Pastor Luis' path

Pastor Luis Cervantes, now the director of AIDIA, was part of that original survey team. "I had no idea that this [survey] was going to end in this," he says, tears streaming down his face. "I am very emotional seeing the Word of God after 20 years." It's a gift to his people, and confirmation that God speaks Luis' heart language: Eastern Apurímac Quechua.

Luis worked as a translator on the New Testament, then took over leadership of AIDIA when work on the Old Testament began. It's been a long and grueling road—but that's not where his focus is right now. Today is about celebration.

Together with local church leader Erwin Palomino, Luis walks to the front of the church. "Welcome, brothers and sisters . . ."

And so the dedication begins.

"Thank you that we now have the Bible in our hands."

– Erwin Palomino, local church leader

Local church leaders including Erwin Palomino (holding the microphone) lead the congregation in prayer after receiving their new Bibles.

"Now we can read the Bible and get it into our hearts"

Quechua culture tends to be reserved—quiet and dignified. Celebration at the arrival of God's Word doesn't take the form of exuberant dancing or loud shouts. Instead, it's expressed through deep emotion and reverent singing.

One hundred and fifty voices pierce the still mountain air with soul-stirring, high-pitched melodies. Many clasp Quechua hymn books that proclaim: *"Jesus also speaks my language. Christ, God, speaks my language."*

Each church group is invited to share a song or a message with the gathering. One pastor, beaming, stands to speak: "The church in our community is growing!" Gesturing toward his group, he adds, "It's bigger than just us—there are only a few of us here today because we had no car."

Receiving God's Word

Pastor Luis then invites leaders from each local congregation to stand before the pulpit. Visiting pastors from Canada, Colombia and Japan gather around them, lifting their Peruvian brothers and sisters in prayer. These Quechua believers carry the weight of leadership—but now, they have God's full counsel to share with their congregations.

AIDIA staff place a copy of the Quechua Bible into each pastor's hands. It's a heavy, beautiful book: bound in black, edged in red and wrapped in protective plastic.

"Now we can read the Bible and get it into our hearts!" announces Erwin, as he leads the gathering in prayer.

The service concludes. Community members flock to the back of the church to purchase their own copies of the Bible. People line up for the single bathroom; some change back into their everyday clothes. Rain begins to spatter the windows as everyone climbs to the rooftop once more.

The journey continues

The celebration ends with lunch, a fitting bookend to the morning. This time, it's hearty portions of potatoes, pasta and the remainder of the cow that was butchered earlier. People pass around communal bowls of *choclo*, giant Peruvian corn, before making the trip back to their own communities and homes.

It's the end of a journey. But in another sense, it's just the beginning. God speaks Eastern Apurímac Quechua, and where His Word goes, transformation follows.

"We understand that it's not us, but it's God's Word; God's power working in us through His Word."

– Pastor Luis Cervantes

AIDIA will host a total of eight Bible celebrations across the Apurímac region in 2025. For many Apurímac Christians, travelling to a central location would be impossible—so AIDIA is bringing the dedications to them. It's a significant undertaking for the team, but their commitment is clear: they are reaching their own people with a translation that speaks their heart language.

Always serving God

TRANSLATOR, CONSULTANT, PASTOR: NO MATTER THE ROLE, OSCAR SANCHEZ HAS ONE PURPOSE

For much of the Bible dedication ceremony, Oscar Sanchez strums a *charango*, quietly accompanying the congregational singing. It reflects his posture of humble, dedicated service—he chooses to follow God's call wherever it leads.

He began serving Quechua communities 25 years ago as a teenager, travelling to remote mountain villages to support worship services with his music. A speaker of Eastern Apurímac Quechua himself, he later joined the Bible translation team and began pastoring a local church. Most recently, he completed intensive training to become certified as a translation consultant.

The road hasn't been easy. Oscar juggles many roles as consultant, mentor, pastor, husband and father. He bears witness to the deep pain that runs through these communities, often expressed as violence and addiction. He's felt that pain personally, when he lost his own father to the effects of alcohol.

But Oscar has also witnessed the hope that changes lives and communities when people encounter Jesus in their own language. It's a hope that never fails.

So where does this worship leader-pastor-translator-consultant see himself in the future?

"If I'm still living, I will be serving in any ministry God wants," he says. "It could be as a consultant or as a pastor, or in a different ministry. But it's always serving God."

Oscar accompanies the dedication's congregational singing on the charango, a traditional Peruvian instrument.

One need at a time

AIDIA STAFF NOEMI ROJAS IS COMMITTED TO HELPING OTHERS —NO MATTER HOW UNUSUAL THE REQUEST

In the back seat of an SUV, Noemi gently holds a lamb that she is transporting to a family who lives higher up the mountain.

The lamb leaps wildly across the field until the farmer finally catches it, ties its legs and places it on Noemi Rojas' lap in the back of the Mitsubishi SUV. She gently strokes its head, and the animal quiets under her touch.

Noemi isn't a shepherd, and this isn't her sheep. But a family higher up the mountain is waiting for it, and the rare chance to use a vehicle will save them a long hike. So Noemi does what AIDIA staff so often do: she steps in to meet the need in front of her.

Drop by drop

That disposition of practical love has defined Noemi's work with AIDIA for the last 16 years. Though her background is in Scripture engagement and literacy, her current focus is on clean water. She travels to remote Apurímac communities, sometimes walking for hours while carrying heavy equipment because there is no road. There, she teaches families how to use and maintain simple water filtration systems to protect against illness and parasites. Each workshop she leads is also a chance to share Scripture, connecting clean water to spiritual truth. "Drop by drop," she grins.

Expanding the water program

Recently, Noemi began expanding the program into the Southern and Northern Pastaza Quechua communities deep in the Amazon basin, where people often dig shallow holes to reach underground water. It looks clear, but it carries hidden dangers. Illness is common, especially among children.

"They were asking for [the water program]," she says. "They said, 'We also want the same thing. Please, bring it here! We want it, too.'"

There's immense need—not just for clean water, but for healthcare, education and deep spiritual healing.

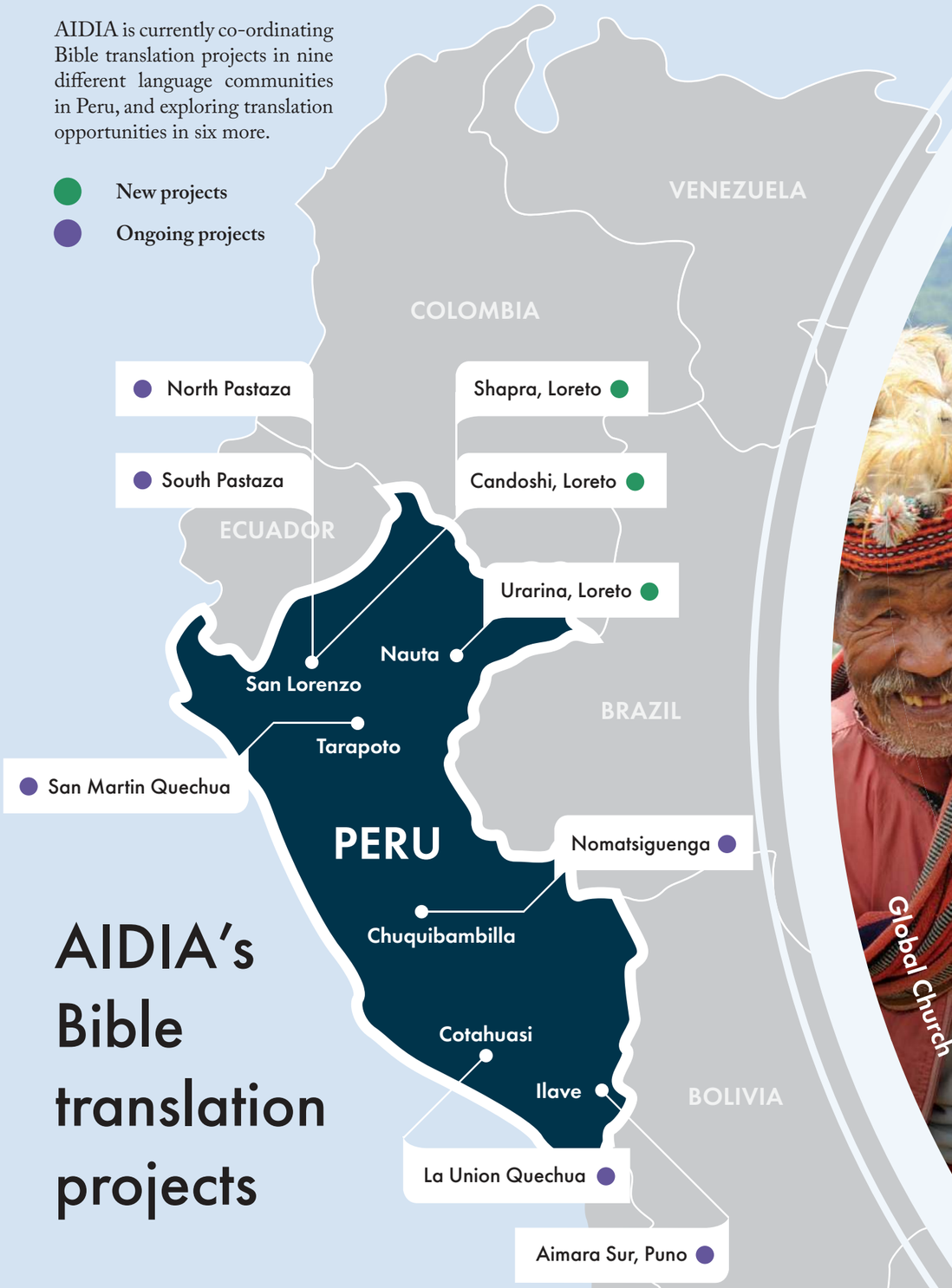
Carried by hope

Resources are limited, and the demand can feel overwhelming. Noemi doesn't always know the next step. But she's carried by the hope that comes from years of walking with Jesus. So she keeps going—one community, one workshop and one sheep at a time.

AIDIA's Bible translation projects

AIDIA is currently co-ordinating Bible translation projects in nine different language communities in Peru, and exploring translation opportunities in six more.

- New projects
- Ongoing projects



The ripple effects of Bible translation

Photos by Natasha Ramirez (1), Alan Hood (2, 3, 5), Daisy Kilel, Wycliffe Global Alliance (4).

Together in mission

A RETIRED COUPLE FROM TORONTO FINDS JOY IN CHURCH UNITY AT THE EASTERN APURÍMAC QUECHUA BIBLE DEDICATION

Stories from the mission field often touched Ludia Sung's heart. Though she and her husband, Chris, were busy running a business in Toronto, she was drawn to God's work around the world. Going to the field herself felt out of reach—but she found joy in praying and giving. "I was happy to know I could serve in other ways," she says.

Then, retirement opened a door. The couple received an invitation to join a small group of donors visiting Peru for the Eastern Apurímac Quechua Bible dedication. Ludia didn't hesitate. "It was a big opportunity to come to Peru . . . God gave us another way to see how He works in the world."

Chris was less certain. In his role as a business owner, he had thrived on managing variables and increasing efficiency—themes that don't always apply to travel in remote destinations. But his wife's determination eventually won him over. "I had to follow and protect her!" he laughs.

From Toronto to Chuquibambilla

The Bible dedication at Chuquibambilla is a long and difficult journey from the airport in Cusco. Many stomach-churning hours on winding, high-altitude roads tested the nerves of everyone in the group. The rugged region of Apurímac is a world away from the Sungs' home in cosmopolitan Toronto.

But the joy with which people received God's Word made the strenuous travel fade in comparison. Everyone in the church hall—locals and international visitors alike—joined together in prayer, their voices and heart languages mingling as they praised God and asked His blessing on the Quechua church. Ludia and Chris were deeply moved by the unity they felt with believers from such different places.

"It encourages me, finding out that I'm not alone," says Chris. "We are together, and we see one goal. . . . We pray for the kingdom of God to be in every corner of the earth."

For Ludia, the trip was a powerful answer to the longing God had placed in her heart years ago. "God can do everything, but He gives us a chance to work together," she says. "I'm honoured and privileged. I'm blessed."

Chris and Ludia Sung pause for a photo near a high-altitude lake en route to the Chuquibambilla Bible dedication.

"God can do everything, but He gives us a chance to work together."

– Ludia Sung, Wycliffe supporter

Photo by Gyoojun Lee

Bible translation: the church at the heart of the story

WYCLIFFE CANADA REAFFIRMS THE CENTRALITY OF THE CHURCH IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

By John Chiu, SVP of Global Partnerships

Alfred Hitchcock once quipped, "in feature films the director is God; in documentary films, God is the director."

Humour aside, Scripture is unequivocal—God is not just the Director, but the Author, Storyteller and Finisher of reality itself. Isaiah 46:10 reminds us that God "declares the end from the beginning," and Psalm 139 tells us that every one of our days is written in His book.

At Wycliffe Canada, our task is to craft our chapter in the grand story God is telling through the Bible translation movement—with humility, courage and fidelity to His narrative.

Reimagining our place in Bible translation

Over the past two years, Wycliffe Canada has prayerfully reimagined our place in this movement, asking: What is God doing in Bible translation today, and how can we align with it?

A pivotal moment came in fall 2024 when the Wycliffe Global Alliance board declared that Bible translation is, at its core, a ministry of the church. This resonated deeply with us at Wycliffe Canada, reinforcing much of what we're hearing. In every conversation with communities and partners, we're rediscovering that the local church isn't taking over Bible translation: It's taking it back.

At our best, Wycliffe Canada has faithfully stewarded this work on behalf of the local church. At our worst, we've acted around the church out of concern for the limits of its expertise and capacity when we should have supported and walked with it. But now, we're stepping into a new chapter of the story God is writing. One where the local church is not peripheral, but central.

Centering the church

Centering the church means the local church is the main character of the story wherever we work, in Canada and abroad. It means ensuring our support amplifies their voice, vision and capacity for Bible translation. It means working humbly in accordance with the maturity and calling of the local church, even when it might be convenient to bypass it to meet our own timelines and expectations.

The recent Eastern Apurímac Quechua Bible celebration in Peru vividly illustrates these principles. Led by AIDIA, a Peruvian organization closely tied to the local church, the project reflects the church's vision and needs—and so local congregations are receiving the translated Scriptures with great anticipation. Wycliffe Canada shares in their excitement as we walk alongside AIDIA.

The continuing story of Bible translation is the story of the local church, with global support. That's what we're experiencing with our brothers and sisters around the world. And it's the story we will continue to tell. With you. With joy.

A short-term trip with long-term impact

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, SIX CANADIANS EXPERIENCE SCRIPTURE'S POWER TO TRANSFORM LIVES

Article by Doug Lockhart. Photos by Helen van der Walt

For young people considering short-term mission opportunities, Wycliffe may not be the first organization that comes to mind. With its focus on Bible translation, many assume that Wycliffe is only looking for linguists, translators or literacy specialists.

However, Wycliffe's short-term trips are a great way for participants to consider, perhaps for the first time, how their skills and training can contribute in a meaningful way to advancing Bible translation, even if they're not trained in linguistics.

This past spring, six Canadians journeyed with two Wycliffe Canada staff on the Transformation: South Africa trip to Southern Africa, where they served in two very different Bible translation projects. One was among the Kaaps language community in bustling Cape Town, while the second focused on the semi-nomadic Himba people in neighbouring Namibia.

The Canadian team presented 150 audio Scripture devices—generously provided by Canadian partners—to the Himba translation team, who will distribute them among their people. For many Himba, these devices will be their only access to Scripture.

The two language projects were chosen because both employ creative strategies to promote engagement with Scripture, with encouraging results.

"We wanted participants to see how the Word of God was relevant in every context," says mission coach Rachel Nweke, "for every person and language and culture."

Team members say the days they spent serving both groups were especially memorable and significant to their own spiritual journeys.

"The way He moved amongst the Kaaps and Himba was amazing to witness," says Sim Stevens of Vancouver, B.C., "especially their joy in hearing and interacting with Scripture."

Same Word, differing contexts

The Kaaps translators are gifted musicians. Since 2022, they have produced dozens of oral and written translations of the Psalms. From these, they have created Scripture songs which they perform in various venues around Cape Town. The Canadian team joined them in two performances, and incorporated drama and spoken word into the presentation. This year, the Kaaps team plans to launch a formal Old Testament translation project.

In neighbouring Namibia, Bible translation is steadily advancing for the Himba, with a strong emphasis on oral translation. The translation team produces Scripture recordings, which many Himba people listen to at home or while tending their cattle, goats or sheep.

In some villages, only a few audio devices with pre-loaded Scripture recordings are available. That's why the Wycliffe team were thrilled to deliver 150 solar-powered audio devices to grateful villagers in one Himba village.

"Exploring Scripture engagement on this trip reminded me just how big God is," says team member Juli Smith of Langley, B.C., "and how His Word reaches us all in beautiful and unique ways. . . ."

The Alive in Kaaps team performs their translated songs in a Kaaps neighbourhood in Cape Town. The Canadian team joined them to worship, dance, pray, share testimonies and distribute soup and bread afterwards.

Kaaps students react with excitement to an Alive in Kaaps outreach performance at their high school in Cape Town.

The outreach provided some good examples of the many skills needed to keep Bible translation moving forward. Furthermore, Calgarian Aidan Eyre says his exposure to Scripture engagement left a big impact on his life.

"I want to keep doing Scripture engagement [activities] in my own life," says Aidan. "I've gained a new appreciation for Scripture and new ways to engage with it."

Bible translation today

6 SURPRISING FEATURES OF BIBLE TRANSLATION TODAY

By Brenda Peat

While Wycliffe Canada's mission is timeless, translation methods have radically changed since the organization's inception in 1942. Get ready to discover **six surprising features of the Bible translation movement today:**

1 Local voices lead the way

The most profound shift in modern Bible translation is undeniably this: the movement is now, more than ever, driven by the communities served. No longer are projects initiated or led by external organizations; instead, mother-tongue translators and their local communities are at the helm.

While Canadians still play an important role, our staff are increasingly stepping into roles as facilitators and partners. That means they are likely not doing the translating themselves, nor leading other language-related initiatives. Wycliffe Canada aims to help local Christians bring their own vision for their communities to life.

2 Technology is making translation faster and more accessible than ever

From software that creates literacy books to AI-supported translation programs and even digital avatars, technology is speeding up translation, and providing a wide variety of content.

These tools help communities connect with Scripture in practical ways, like sharing helpful, Bible-based content—think Bible studies, literacy tools or health info—right on their phones.

3 Scripture engagement is crucial

Translating the Bible is only the beginning! Communities need to engage with Scripture in a way that relates to their everyday lives, or there's a risk of the Bible simply gathering dust on a shelf. Scripture engagement efforts could be recording audio Scripture, creating music from Psalms, producing Bible studies or counselling materials, or even painting murals from Scripture.

4 The toughest work is still ahead

We estimate there are fewer than 700 languages left where Bible translation work is yet to start. The places where people are still waiting for Bible translation are often remote. In these regions, Christians can face severe persecution. That's why prayer and support from the global church is absolutely essential.

Photos by: Natasha Ramirez (large centre), Alan Hood (small left), Ruth Richert (small middle) and Derryl Friesen (small right).

A Quechua couple reads a copy of the Eastern Apurímac Quechua New Testament, following a Quechua service at a church in Abancay, Peru

5 Deaf communities need sign language translations

Can you believe that out of nearly 400 sign languages worldwide, only one—American Sign Language—has a complete Bible? And close to 98% of the Deaf have never been introduced to the gospel! Across the world, most Deaf can't read and don't have access to sign language educational materials. That's why Wycliffe organizations are creating video versions of Scripture in sign languages.

6 Language is identity, and worth preserving

In many places, Wycliffe organizations are helping put spoken languages into written form for the very first time. The teams create dictionaries, literacy tools and stories, all alongside Scripture. These resources help people feel proud of their heritage, and that strong sense of identity often leads to better outcomes in their daily lives. That's why Wycliffe Canada is helping communities preserve languages, including some Indigenous languages in Canada. ■

TRANSLATING SCRIPTURE.
TRANSFORMING LIVES.

To support Wycliffe Canada projects that include Bible translation initiatives like the ones in these stories, you can make a gift online at **wycliffe.ca/give**

For more articles, photos and videos about Bible translation visit **stories.wycliffe.ca**

Pray with us

Shared by Anna Sklar
Photo by Ruth Richert

Praise God that the Eastern Apurímac Quechua translation is complete, and that so many communities were able to join the Bible dedication celebrations!

Pray that access to the whole Bible would lead to transformation for individuals, families and entire communities.

Praise God that local pastors are using the translated Scripture to disciple their congregations and to plant new churches! **Pray** that these churches will grow and thrive.

Lord, thank You for the wonderful ways You've already shown Your love and grace to the Eastern Apurímac Quechua people. We pray for an ever-increasing sense of Your Spirit among these communities. May they continue to grow in the knowledge that You see them, You love them and they are valuable in Your eyes. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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