

CUBAN BIBLE SOCIETY FOUNDED

.....

In September 2023, the Cuban Bible Society was founded. Although Bible work has been carried out there previously, it marked a historic moment in the history of Bible mission in that country. In the 1950s, there was an office of the American Bible Society in Cuba, but after Fidel Castro came to power it had to close.

In 1983, the Cuban Bible Commission (CBC), supported by the United Bible Societies (UBS), was established to distribute Bibles to churches. It ran the successful One Million Bibles for Cuba campaign which distributed Bibles to churches throughout Cuba, which many of our donors helped to support.

Cuban women with family Bibles they received from Bible Society.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©HANS JOHAN SAGRUSTEN

Now, after forty years there is a fully-fledged Bible Society there. And the need for Bibles is as great as ever. New churches are springing up and there are more than 50,000 house churches. "The Church weathered the difficult years from 1958 – 1995 with perseverance and faith. Now, churches have a good reputation, and Cubans trust them," says Bible Society General Secretary Alain Montano.

Recently, Alain and his team attended an open-air service, seven hundred kilometres east of Havana. When they arrived, there were already 3,000 people waiting. Throughout the afternoon people kept pouring in, including many non-believers, coming to enjoy the music and the speeches. Halfway through the service they had distributed the 5,000 Bibles they had brought with them. No one wanted to leave without a Bible.

During the years when Christians were discriminated against in Cuba, children did



Dear Friends of Bible Mission,

Welcome to the Autumn issue of *The Word at Work*. In this issue, I'm pleased to share inspiring stories of Bible projects that are making tangible differences in the lives of people in countries ranging from Honduras to Vietnam to Albania. Each national Bible Society crafts projects that are intended to have the greatest impact upon people's lives through the Bible. This year, we are supporting forty-nine international projects which will see God's Word delivered into the hands of many around the world. Like us, they are enormously grateful for your support.

But sometimes we encounter new needs as we progress throughout the year. Currently, one of those is Haiti which is experiencing many challenges. We will be doing an emergency appeal by email for Haiti soon. If you receive email communications from us, keep an eye out for an appeal for Haiti in your inbox.

Recently, the Bible Society of Ghana celebrated Bible Week emphasising the Bible's role in fostering peace and unity in society. In July, we will be celebrating Bible Month here in New Zealand. We will be encouraging churches and individuals to uplift the Bible as a key part of our Christian life, in keeping with our theme that The Bible is Truth. A 31-day devotional will be available on our website which you or your church can download to highlight the importance of the Bible.

I would like to thank each one of you who has responded to our Bible Lands appeal in January, enabling the mission to carry on in those places under trying circumstances. Thank you once again for everything you do to support the mission!



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neels J. van Rensburg'.

Neels Janse van Rensburg
CEO



Miri, a young Roma boy, who has joined one of the football teams.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©INTERCONFESSIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY OF ALBANIA.

not attend church, meaning that churches lost an entire generation of believers. Now, the churches are full of children. One church that the team visited recently had four hundred children, and this is occurring across all denominations. "Bibles are needed for both children and young adults," says Alain.

The Bible Society team witnesses many Cubans' lives changing under the influence of the Bible. "Their economic situation is not good, so their only hope is their faith. Cuba cannot do without the hope and values of the Bible. You see it all around you: Cuba is fertile ground for the gospel," says Alain.

OPEN THE BOOK - ALBANIA

The Interconfessional Bible Society of Albania is connecting children with the Bible through its Open the Book programme, a project which is supported by our Bible a Month Regular Givers. The staff run summer camps for children, both Christian and non-Christian, where they share Bible stories with the children, which the children cheerfully re-enact. Last year, 1,120 children received Bibles through the project.

Bible Society has also opened a Friends for Life sports centre in the capital city, Tirana. The centre both serves as the headquarters for Bible mission in Albania and provides a central hub for activities. Bible Society aims to reach out to disadvantaged children with sports and other activities.

One of the children who has joined one of the football teams at the Sports Hub is eleven-

year-old Miri. He is from the marginalised Roma community, and he helps his deaf parents by collecting cans from rubbish bins to sell. "Sometimes we see Miri carrying a huge bag of cans in one of the streets near our Sports Hub. He smiles and waves at us, knowing that he is now part of our family. It is heart-warming to think that he could have a different future one day, through the help of his coaches," says a Bible Society representative.

TACKLING CORRUPTION IN HONDURAS

Honduras is one of Latin America's most violent countries. Gangs, drug trafficking, and corruption impact the lives of many people there. Families cannot go out at night and children cannot go outside to play. Some

A Honduran soldier looks at the Bible he has received.

PHOTO CREDIT: @RONALDO GÓMEZ



parents keep their children home from school for fear they will be kidnapped. People are at risk of being attacked when they travel to work or school.

Corruption is common even in the National Police, the military and in prisons. Several years ago, the government requested Bible Society to work with these institutions to bring about culture change. Primarily they do this by partnering with chaplaincies and supporting Bible-based programmes, and distributing Bibles. For example, the Chaplain General of the Honduran Armed Forces reports that they recently implemented a programme entitled, "The Bible and values for the military," which included the distribution of 5,771 Bibles to soldiers.

Bible Society has recently distributed 2,000 copies of the Reina Valera Bible, a version that is popular throughout Latin America, to the police. In addition, the police are holding prayer days three times a month and they have weekly meetings where volunteers preach.

LITERACY CHANGING LIVES IN VIETNAM

.....

In Tay Ninh, a province in the southeast of Vietnam, there is a large man-made reservoir called Dau Tieng Lake. Many families live along the lake shore eking out a living by fishing and selling their catch at the market. They live in simple wooden huts, and they lack even basic amenities such as electricity and running water. Many of the children from these families are unable to go to school. They must stay home and help their parents

with household chores such as fishing, cooking, or cleaning.

One such child is John*. John is a good son to his parents and a good brother to his three siblings, but he longed to be able to go to school and to learn to read and write. One day, volunteers came into his community and started a Bible-based literacy programme for children. Once a week, John attends literacy classes. Within six months, he has learned to read!

As part of the programme, John received a Scripture book which he treasures and keeps in a plastic bag under his sleeping mat. He reads it whenever he has a chance: every morning when he wakes up, during the day when he has spare time, and every night before he goes to sleep. He also shares it with his siblings, and he is teaching them to read as well.

*Name changed.

John reading the Scripture book he has received.

PHOTO CREDIT: @QUAN PHAN





Some of the youth who took part in the activities during Bible week.

PHOTO CREDIT: @BIBLE SOCIETY OF GHANA.

GHANA CELEBRATES BIBLE WEEK

.....

In February 2024, the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG) celebrated Bible Week, an eight-day event dedicated to sharing the good news of the Bible and its relevance to the nation of Ghana. This year, the activities included a Bible-reading marathon, a Bible quiz, live worship events, a youth forum, a Bible discussion and symposium, and thanksgiving services, among others.

The theme was: "The Bible: Guide for Peace, Unity and Development," which was seen as being particularly relevant in an election year. "The Bible enjoins all to 'make every effort to live in peace with everyone...'

Hebrews 12:14 (ESV). The task of being peaceable towards others and maintaining unity is given to none other but you and I," said the Very Rev. Dr John Kwesi Addo Jnr, General Secretary for the Bible Society of Ghana. He called upon Ghanaians to return to serious reading and study of the Bible "to purify our lives and to maintain a peaceful community for everyone."

In 2025, the Bible Society of Ghana will celebrate 60 years of Bible mission in Ghana. Already, it has translated the Bible into nine major Ghanaian languages, and it is continuing with other translations, including Dagaare, Gurune, and Bono, while revising some of the older Bible revisions.

It is also involved with a range of Bible engagement and advocacy projects including trauma healing, literacy, and Scripture engagement for people with visual disabilities. **This year, our Bible a Month Regular Givers are supporting a Scripture distribution project which aims to distribute children's Bibles to children in primary schools in semi-urban and rural areas.**

HAITI CRISIS

In the previous issue of *The Word at Work*, we brought you a story about the ongoing work of the Haitian Bible Society bringing Bibles to school children during a political and economic crisis. The situation in Haiti has now reached critical levels. Gang violence has intensified, with recent attacks targeting key infrastructure like the Port au Prince airport and police stations. The country is under a state of emergency and a curfew is in place.

"The situation has worsened, all flights to Haiti are suspended. It's total chaos; the destruction of human lives, private property and state property is unspeakable. Since the beginning of February, HBS has been operating slowly, now all the businesses are closed. It is total paralysis," says Magda Victor, General Secretary of the Haitian Bible Society.

Please pray for Haiti and the Bible Society staff there.



HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Would you prayerfully consider making a gift to support youth & children in Syria, Lebanon, Uruguay & South Africa?

IN MEMORIAM

Bible Society has learned of the passing of the following friends. Gifts towards the work of Bible Society's mission have been made in their memory. Their work of love goes on.

Rob Hawes
Valerie C Johnston
Ivapene Leriko
Peter Llewellyn
Ronald McCosh
Manuvao Pailate
Anya Phillips
Te Rira Puketapu
Margaret Worsfold

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

To find out more visit:
www.biblesociety.org.nz/bequest



THE LAST WORD

We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. Psalm 33:20 (NIV)

0800 424 253 ▪ www.biblesociety.org.nz
bibles@biblesociety.org.nz ▪ April 2024
Charities registration number: CC22121