



Members of the Stiang church joyfully receive copies of the Stiang New Testament.

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VIETNAM'S STIANG RECEIVE NEW TESTAMENT

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Vietnam, a country of 105.7 million people, is mainly inhabited by the Kinh or Vietnamese people. However, the Vietnamese government also recognises fifty-four ethnic groups, including the Stiang, the Bunong, the Tay, and the Cham.

The Stiang group, consisting of approximately 100,752 people, resides in

southeastern Vietnam along the border with Cambodia. After the French colonial period when post-colonial borders were being drawn up, the Stiang's ancestral territory was split between Vietnam and Cambodia. Today, the Stiang live on both sides of the border, with the majority living in Vietnam.

In 1953, the Stiang first encountered the Gospel. Despite facing persecution, the Stiang Church grew, and today, around 80 percent of Stiang identify as Christian. In 1971, missionaries translated a portion of Scripture into the Stiang language. However, over the decades, they received little additional Scripture, and low literacy levels, due to an education system primarily in Khmng Christian community in translating the Bible into their own language. This effort reached a significant

Dear Friends of Bible Mission,

Welcome to the Winter issue of *The Word at Work*. In this issue I'm pleased to bring you news of new Scripture releases in Vietnam and Scotland. In April, the Ukrainian Bible Society met with Ukraine's President Zelensky, who personally thanked Bible Society for its work in bringing Bibles to military chaplains. Many of you have helped to support this work, so thank you.

We also read the story of Liang, a lay preacher in China, whose confidence as a preacher improved after she was gifted a Chinese Study Bible from the United Bible Societies (UBS). In April 2024, I was privileged to be part of a UBS delegation which visited China with the aim of fostering relationships with key stakeholders in China. These included the leaders of the religious affairs administration, church ministry partners, administrators, and leaders of the faculties of theological institutions, and staff at the Amity Printing Company.

Time and time again, the Chinese hosts expressed deep appreciation for UBS's friendship, partnership, and contributions to the growth and development of the churches in China, especially through Bible publishing and distribution. They highlighted that the relationships and collaboration between UBS and the Chinese churches have spanned nearly four decades - a milestone worth celebrating, a story worth telling! And if you have supported the mission in China over the years, then you have contributed to that story! Thank you!

This month, our appeal focus is on marginalised women and girls in India, Cameroon, and Peru who are facing many challenges. If you can contribute to support this work, we would be very grateful. Thank you once again for everything you do to support the mission!



A blue ink handwritten signature of Neels Janse van Rensburg.

Neels Janse van Rensburg
CEO

The joy on Pheu's face shows his delight in receiving the Stieng New Testament

PHOTO CREDIT: ©QUAN PHAN



milestone on March 7, 2024, when the Bible Society Vietnam published the first-ever Stieng New Testament.

To celebrate this achievement, members of the Evangelical Board of Representatives held a special meeting to introduce the Stieng New Testament to the church community. Attendees learned about the entire translation process from the translation team. Many were moved to tears, praising God for His faithfulness and providence while singing joyfully.

"Holding this New Testament in my hands is an indescribable feeling," said Pheu*, a Stieng Christian. "The Stieng language is not just a means of communication for us; it embodies our culture and identity. This is a moment of pure joy for me and my community. Sincere thanks to the translators and everyone involved who made this possible," says Pheu.

* Name changed to protect identity.

GAELIC CHILDREN'S BIBLE

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Gaelic is an ancient language that made its way to Scotland via Irish settlers during the 4th to 5th centuries. It became the predominant language in rural areas, but after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the British government sought to suppress the Gaelic language and its usage rapidly declined.

Today, there are around 54,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland, with another 30,000 possessing some degree of proficiency. Waves of emigration in the 18th and 19th centuries saw Gaelic established in communities in Nova Scotia, Canada and other places in North America. The language also has a special place in the heart of Scottish Christians as a language preserved by church communities and kept alive through its use in church life.



Gaelic-speaking school children with copies of the Gaelic Children's Bible.

PHOTO CREDIT: @SCOTTISH BIBLE SOCIETY

Recent legislative measures have infused new life into Gaelic preservation efforts. In 1985, the introduction of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) into primary schools provided immersive instruction in Gaelic to primary school aged children for the first time. In 2005, the programme was extended into secondary schools. In the same year, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act recognised Gaelic as an official language.

This has given fresh impetus to the Scottish Bible Society's aim of providing Gaelic Scripture. Partnering with the Church of Scotland, it has translated and printed 1,500 copies of a Gaelic children's Bible which are free for anyone who requests one. As well, an audio version of the Gaelic children's Bible has been recorded. This is available via QR code in the back of every Gaelic children's Bible, so families can listen as they read along.

It is hoped that together these initiatives will have a multi-generational impact on people's language usage and their faith. "This children's bible is to encourage grandparents, parents, and friends to use their language skills to read to their children. The associated audio recording can also aid those learning the language. The Gaelic language is ever evolving, and each generation has a duty to cultivate its development and preserve its use for generations to come," says Mairi Morrison, the Scottish Bible Society's Gaelic Coordinator.

LAY PREACHER GRATEFUL FOR STUDY BIBLE

Across China, churches rely on lay preachers, many of whom live in rural areas and have little education or theological training. To

bridge the gap, churches provide Bible Equipping Courses on topics such as Christian doctrine and theology. The United Bible Societies supports the churches by providing biblical resources, including the Chinese Study Bible (CSB), to lay preachers.

Liang Mianxing, 45, has served as a lay preacher in her local church for more than twenty years. Liang first came to faith as a teenager when someone in her village shared the Gospel with her and her mother. Like many Chinese, Liang left her village in the 1990s seeking work in the nearby bustling province of Guangdong.

When she returned, she began attending her local church where, being one of the few members who could read, she was soon asked to preach. But Liang felt ill-equipped to preach. "I didn't know how to preach and felt embarrassed. When we shared from the Bible, we were also not sure if we had misinterpreted it," says Liang.

Lay preacher, Liang Mianxing, with her Chinese Study Bible.

PHOTO CREDIT: @UBS CP



Sensing the need for some Bible training, she undertook a one-year Bible training programme organised by the Guangxi Christian Council, after which she began to preach more regularly. However, like many other lay preachers, she continued to face challenges, struggling to explain some Bible passages, and to preach with confidence. Liang was therefore overjoyed when she received the Chinese Study Bible, which contains study notes translated and adapted from Crossway's ESV Study Bible.

She had never owned any study Bible prior to this. Now Liang takes Bible classes, three to four times a week. She consults the CSB regularly to minister God's Word more effectively.

"Thanks to the generosity of UBS in providing the CSB, my understanding of the Bible's historical context has deepened. This has helped to make my sermons clearer and enabled our fellow believers to have a better grasp of the Word of God. It has been a great blessing to the church community!" says Liang.

UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VISITS BIBLE SOCIETY

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In April 2024, Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, met with the leaders of the Ukrainian Bible Society and church leaders at Bible House in Kyiv. Despite his busy schedule, President Zelensky took the time to express his gratitude for their unwavering support to Ukrainians during these difficult times.

"It is very important that people can come, talk to you, and pray. I would also like to express my gratitude for the service of our military chaplains. Thanks to you, our men and women at the front can connect with you and feel support from you," said President Zelensky.

Rev. Anatoliy, Deputy General Secretary of the Bible Society, elaborates on the discussion. "The President spoke frankly about the numerous challenges and threats that exist today and what this terrible war entails. He expressed his gratitude and emphasised the important role of the Church in pastoral, spiritual, psychological, and humanitarian work. In particular, he thanked Bible Society for supporting military chaplains by providing Bibles, which are essential for both soldiers on the frontline and in the rear," says Rev. Anatoliy.

"Amid the incessant bombing, millions of people have sought refuge in church buildings. At the same time, the war has compelled churches to go beyond their buildings to help those who are suffering amid the chaos," says Rev. Anatoliy.

President Zelensky, centre, pictured with the General Secretary of the Ukrainian Bible Society, right, and the Deputy General Secretary, left.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©OLEH SYROTKIN



And in these darkest of days, God's Word continues to spread across the nation thanks to the hard work of the Ukrainian Bible Society team. "Personally, I have encountered pastors in bomb shelters, hospitals, and church basements, where they prayed with frightened people and read children's Bibles in complete darkness to groups of frightened children.

There is a great interest in God's Word, which is confirmed by the fact that Bible Society has distributed 1,025,000 Bibles during twenty-five months of war. Every day, seven days a week, churches are receiving Bibles from Bible Society to serve hundreds of thousands of people who are getting their first experience with the church," says Rev. Anatoliy.

A heartfelt thank you goes to our Bible a Month Regular Givers and Appeal givers who have supported the Bibles for Military Chaplains project over the past four years.

To watch a video on Ukraine scan this QR code.



Rev. Anatoliy, front left, and other volunteer chaplains visiting wounded soldiers in hospital and gifting them New Testaments.

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HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Would you prayerfully consider making a gift to provide Bibles for marginalised women and girls in India, Cameroon, and Peru?

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.

Pamela Jean Diprose
Hettie Brits
The Mother of Esther Constance
Griffin Foster

A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

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THE LAST WORD

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. Psalm 19:8 (NIV)

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