

WORD *IN ACTION*

The Bible – sharing it and living it

www.biblesociety.org.uk

Winter 2009

VIEWPOINT



TAKE ACTION

TO SOME the words 'Bible' and 'fresh' seem unlikely companions. Not to a new multi-agency project launched this autumn; *Biblefresh* sets out to demonstrate the reality.

Bible Society joins over 40 Christian agencies in *Biblefresh* to provide ideas and resources for England and Wales. The aim is to encourage you, your church and its groups to taste

the powerful words of Scripture in a new zesty way.

Word In Action reveals how Bible Society is making 'Bible fresh'.

As an appetiser read how inner city churches in Manchester and Bristol are developing a practical understanding of Scripture to apply to everyday life on page 7.

Exciting outcomes from *Biblefresh* include projects raising funds for Bible translations. You can read more of the impact your gifts could have in Peru on page 12.

And around the world Christians continue to be blessed by your prayers and gifts in making the Bible a reality in their lives. Thank you.

James Catford Chief Executive, Bible Society

NEWS

- You can turn your film idea into reality – with a Hollywood headliner

Fancy meeting with a Hollywood legend – to discuss your own movie? That dream could come true, if you win a new competition run by Bible Society and director Ralph Winter – the man behind the *Star Trek* and *X-Men* films.

The Pitch challenges you to pitch to make a three-minute film retelling a biblical event or theme. And the top prize is an all-expenses paid trip to Hollywood to meet Ralph and discuss your film and get his feedback on creating a mini-classic.

'We want someone who can make an entertaining short story wrapped round a spiritual or biblical character or theme,' said Bible Society's Arts Development Officer Luke Walton.

For instance, your entry could be a new take on the Prodigal Son – or a musical version of the Lost Sheep. The Bible contains some of the best stories ever told – with storylines a Hollywood producer would die for.

'Look at the massive success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion*,' said Luke, 'it took Hollywood by storm. Other notable movies like *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Toy Story* have a redemption theme. Despite being written thousands of years ago, the Bible's themes are still relevant to society today.'

The winner will have the chance to meet Ralph Winter, a committed Christian and one

TO BOLDLY GO ... WITH A BLOCKBUSTER



Photo: Nigel Hillier

of Hollywood's hottest properties. 'There'll be the chance draw on his experience,' Luke explained.

'Even taking part in this country offers massive opportunities – take a look at the website to see the judges you could meet.'

Bible Society has won a number of international film awards over the past few years and recognises the importance of telling God's story on the big screen. 'We all love a good movie which really gets its message across, while being entertaining and fun,' said Luke.

'It's a great way to reach people who may not

go to church or read the Bible, and get them thinking in the process. I know there are many talented film-makers out there – we want to hear from them.'

The Pitch is open to anyone over 18. The film could be any genre or format, except documentary. The ten best entries will go forward to a final panel of judges who will select a winner. Full details are available at www.enterthepitch.com

To take part – register and upload your pitch before 30 November 2009 at www.enterthepitch.com



The Hatam raised a quarter of the cost of publishing their 15,000 Bibles.

EX-SATANISTS CELEBRATE SCRIPTURE

INDONESIA NEW GUINEA. Satanic influences formerly gripped the 10,000-strong Hatam people of Papua, Indonesia New Guinea. But now they have the Word that sets people free.

As animists, the Hatam even used to practise a form of cannibalism. But with the arrival of missionaries in the 1950s, they turned to Christ – and this year, finally received the Scriptures in their own language.

'The Hatam Tribal Movement to Christ began in 1962,' recalled Chad Griffiths, one of the original Evangelical Alliance Mission team. 'Proof that this turning was genuine was their hunger to learn more of God's Word.'

'Each Bible School session was the testing ground for verses as they were being translated. We learned new words, and the pastors learned new truths.'

Over the years, books of the Bible were translated, printed and taught one by one – until the entire New Testament was published by the Indonesian Bible Society in 1993. Eight thousand copies were sold within a few months.

Bible Society's Regional Translation Coordinator Dr Daud Soesilo felt the local

Christians needed the complete Bible. The translation was launched in March, with the Hatam raising a quarter of the money to publish 15,000 copies.

Over 2,000 people celebrated the completion of the 50-year project. And the mountain station of Minyambo rang with hymns and shouts of praise to God.

SMALL BIBLE SOCIETY SHOWS BIG HEART

SWAZILAND. A small Bible Society in a small country has taken a big step – to reach out to the unheard and unseen deaf community of Swaziland.

Not only have they launched a new Signed Gospel of Luke in SiSwati, but they have also trained a hearing team to use sign language.

This summer it delivered on that pledge – with 15 students completing a three-month course in sign language.

The initiative was run by Bible Society in partnership with Swaziland's National Association of the Deaf. 'Hearing people find it hard to work with deaf people,' said Pastor

SLOVAKIA. 50,000 people are expected to engage with Scripture – through a unique initiative led by the Slovak Bible Society.

Linking with a Christian radio station, the Society is broadcasting Scripture readings from its *Lectio Divina* project. Reaction from listeners across all confessions has been extremely positive, according to Radio Lumen, a Roman Catholic radio station operating round the clock in Banská Bystrica.

The station is making weekly *Lectio Divina* broadcasts, based on a Bible Society booklet that guides people through the four steps associated with 'holy reading'.

Ngwenya, one of the teachers. 'This training will go a long way towards helping hearing and deaf people improve communications.'

With more training in the pipeline, work continues, with the Gospel of John now in final production.

Swaziland has around 7,000 hearing-impaired people – most of whom have no effective means of communicating at all.

Bible Society's Africa Area Secretary David Hammond said. 'I am proud the Bible Society in Swaziland decided to help this marginalised community. They sometimes feel forgotten and trampled upon.'

TELL THE REAL STORY OF CHRISTMAS

BIBLE SOCIETY is launching its 2009 Christmas stickers and Vicky Morse, post room mistress and her team are bracing themselves for the challenge. 'Twice as many people ordered Bible Society's Christmas stickers in 2008. It was a big thrill sending 15,000 sets to supporters last autumn', she explained. 'And we're ready for this year's rush.'

The stickers tell the real story of Christmas on parcels and envelopes. For those wanting more of the story they give a link to the Christmas Unwrapped website at www.ChristmasUnwrapped.org.uk Here the full story of Christmas is spelled out using the individual illustrations.

Danish artist illustrator Esben Hanefelt Kristensen created the designs. He has also worked with the Danish Bible Society and is currently working on a children's storybook.

If you'd like more sets of the 2009 Christmas stickers call us on 01793 18222 or contactus@biblesociety.org.uk.



FROM WALES TO THE WORLD

JOB CREATION, boosting tourism – and repositioning Scripture at the core of Welsh culture – are all part of Bible Society plans to transform a redundant church.

Major plans to transform a place of worship into an internationally recognised Faith Heritage Centre for Wales, have been unveiled by Bible Society.

St Bueno's in Llanycil, north Wales has been earmarked for restoration and redevelopment to commemorate the role of the Bible in Welsh history – while helping visitors discover the relevance of Scripture's life-changing message today.

For Bible Society it's a unique opportunity to come home to its roots. It was in nearby Bala that Mary Jones received the Bible after her historic 26-mile walk. And it was here in 1804 the idea for the worldwide Bible Society movement was first mooted by church leader Thomas Charles.

The vision for the centre is far reaching. But at its core is a commitment to keep Wales' cultural and spiritual heritage alive for this, and future generations. It involves creating jobs, building tourism in north Wales, and completely re-modelling the

building with a focus on education and the power of the Bible to transform lives.

The redundant church has already been bought by Bible Society, and now an appeal has been launched for the project development.

Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly of Wales, recognised the contribution of the Bible to Wales and the value of Bible Society's vision for the locality. By building a capital sum, Bible Society will be able to access generous match-funded grants available through Government and international bodies.



Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly of Wales recognized the contribution of the Bible to Wales and the value of Bible Society's vision for the locality.

WEBUSER MAGAZINE rated the Bible Society's website with four stars out of five, a powerful commendation in this popular internet users' magazine. And it deemed the website 'truly impressive'.

The new site came online in August and provides supporters with easy access to nearly 900 Bible-related resources. This includes many which are free to download at www.biblesociety.org.uk

'This will help people in and outside the Church to discover the relevance of the Bible today,' explains Peter Meadows, Associate Executive Director of Bible Society, who has overseen the project. 'Now they no longer need to leave hungry.'

You can read *Word in Action* online and easily download it from Bible Society's new website. If you no longer require a paper copy of the magazine please let us know by calling 01793 418222 and save postage.

BRIDGET JONES MEETS THE BIBLE

BRIDGET JONES and the Bible go together – that's the view of actor, writer and cleric Natalie Garrett.

For she believes Ms Jones' emotional roller-coaster ride is the stuff of life – just like the Scriptures. So when Natalie penned a series of one-woman shows on stories from the Bible, she decided the comedy and tragedy of the famous anti-heroine should sit alongside the biblical story of the Woman at the Well.

'It's the story of a modern woman, striving to get through life, interwoven with the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well,' she said. 'I wanted today's Bridget Jones to have the same conversation – and the same journey.'

Natalie's writing and performance is a way of translating the Bible for people who

would 'never dream of reading it' – and for others to see it in a new light.

Currently working with Bible Society to share her productions more widely, Natalie wants to offer people 'a good night out'. That means creating opportunities after the show to chat about what they have seen.

'For some people, this will be their first experience of the Bible,' said Natalie. 'I want to be sure conversations continue long after the performance.'

Bible Society supporters are encouraged to sample Natalie's vibrant material which is suitable for Christmas and throughout the year and features stories about Jesus' mother, the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and many more. For further information, call 01793 418222 or email contactus@biblesociety.org.uk.



Natalie Garrett

Photo: Natalie Garrett

HOPE

in our villages, towns & cities

PAINT A HOPEFUL PICTURE

TINY TOTS can use their fingers. Veteran artists can use oils. Everyone across the age range is being called to paint pictures of hope.

Churches, schools and youth groups in England and Wales are invited to stage a competition to portray *Images of Hope* inspired by stories from the Bible. This grew out of the successful *Hope08* campaign supported by Bible Society.

Whether under-fives retell their favourite Bible story with paper and finger paints, or adults express their creativity with oils on canvas – this initiative is an opportunity for everyone to interpret their vision of hope in their way.

By encouraging people to think about the Bible, it is hoped people will engage with Scripture and discover its relevance to their lives. The competition is designed to bring communities together as they focus on hope – and have fun.

Bible Society will help with hosting exhibitions and prize-giving events, but has developed the competition to be run independently by groups or individuals. An information pack can be downloaded at www.biblesociety.org.uk/imagesofhope

• **Caroline Price** is a freelance journalist.

the
power
of one



*Anything can happen
when just one person
engages with the Bible ...*

It puts God's Word into action. That's how Bible Society of Tanzania's HIV and AIDS Co-ordinator Neema Kiswaga describes the *Good Samaritan* programme.

Workshop participant Rose Maongezi agreed the approach is unique and effective. 'I've attended many HIV and AIDS training sessions,' she said, 'but I like the *Good Samaritan* idea of incorporating HIV information with God's Word.'

'It's really touching and encouraging – knowing God's plan for those who are infected or affected. I feel so involved and encouraged to share with you my HIV status, something I had no courage to do before.'

In 2008, the Bible Society of Tanzania and its partners ran more than ten training workshops and 35 decentralised workshops, attended by more than 1,000 people.

Use these stickers on your Christmas cards.

Make Christmas real among your friends.

For more FREE stickers call 01793 418222

bible society
making the Bible real

Read the Christmas story for yourself
www.ChristmasUnwrapped.org.uk

To order more sets of Christmas Stickers contact us at

01793 418222

contactus@biblesociety.org.uk

www.biblesociety.org.uk
or www.christmasunwrapped.org.uk



Eula Mesquita said, 'The words of the Bible become more powerful after we've explored the stories through scrapbooking, and so on. I think these experiences are making me more tolerant.'

People of the Book are breaking free of the book culture – as *Seren Boyd* found in Manchester

Mission gets messy

Messy, merry and aromatic are the best ways to describe Revd Kate Gray's Bible studies. She's more likely to hand out paintbrushes and perfume than copies of the King James Bible.

Rather than pondering worthy theological footnotes, when they 'read the Word' at St Mark's URC, south Manchester, they let rip with daubing, dancing and debating – and dipping into *Harry Potter*. It's a perfect example of the new *Biblefresh* campaign that encourages churches to rethink Scripture.

Kate aims to inspire Church and community with a passion for the Bible and see its

Photo: Cate Thornton



Revd Kate Gray (l) is committed to Bible study. Her novel approach to the studies gives them impact. People understand the relevance to everyday life and lives begin to change. Eula Mesquita (r) has discovered this too.

familiar stories in a fresh light. So at Lent, St Mark's congregation literally sniffed their way through a retelling of Luke 7 where the prostitute pours perfume over Jesus' feet – among other stories.

At Pentecost, St Mark's and other churches took over the civic centre with a vibrant spectacle of Indian dance, art and music. 'We've all heard these Bible stories a million times,' said Kate. 'We're always saying God

still speaks to us today – but do we really sense that?'

That's precisely the challenge of *Biblefresh*, in which Bible Society has a lead role. It's national, ecumenical and radical – and it's helping people to engage with God again by rediscovering his Word in fresh ways.

Biblefresh Senior Campaign Manager for Bible Society Rob Cotton is thrilled to see churches like St Mark's 'thinking outside the box', as he put it. 'Kate is a great example of

Happy birthday, KJV

Centuries after it was first published, and it's still pulling readers. The *King James Bible* will be 400 years old in 2011 – and plans are underway to celebrate what is probably the single most influential book in the English language.

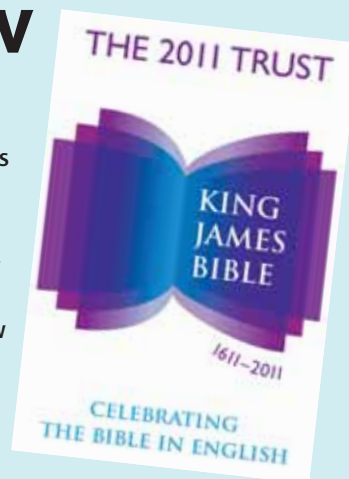
The 2011 Trust has been set up with help from Bible Society to celebrate the impact of the Bible in English in history and on language – in this country and across the English-speaking world.

Celebrations will include events at Hampton Court, where the translation was commissioned in 1604. The year will close on 16

November 2011 with a service in Westminster Abbey where the Bible's final editing was completed.

The Trust has a lengthy list of stimulating events for all ages. New music and literature will be commissioned. There will be lectures in cities along King James' route from Scotland to London which focus on the translation story.

Major exhibitions are proposed for London – and other major cities at significant locations where the translations were made – as well as fun street-culture projects.



There have been few more important single publications than the King James Bible, whose impact has been considerable. To find out more, visit www.2011trust.org.

• **Seren Boyd** is a freelance journalist.

Fact

POST MODERN

Today's postmodern culture demands that we use various platforms and channels to help people engage with Scripture

PRE-MODERN

Old Testament prophets used various media to share their message – including storytelling, drama, poetry and song

INCLUDING

Storytelling is a strong tradition for some cultures. Bible Societies are teaching lay leaders how to share Scripture with non-readers.

Writing is on the wall

The revolutionary gospel will get a high profile in a hotbed of political radicalism and artistic activity.

For St Mark's Baptist Church, Easton, Bristol, has been working on a 400-foot-long mural based on Mark's Gospel. The plan is to present the Gospel themes by painting them around the outside of the church wall – and work has already begun.

'Most people here would never consider coming into church,' said one of the project founders Jo Waterfall. 'We hope the mural will become a significant part of the character of our street – and God will use it to let people know something of the hope, life and liberation that

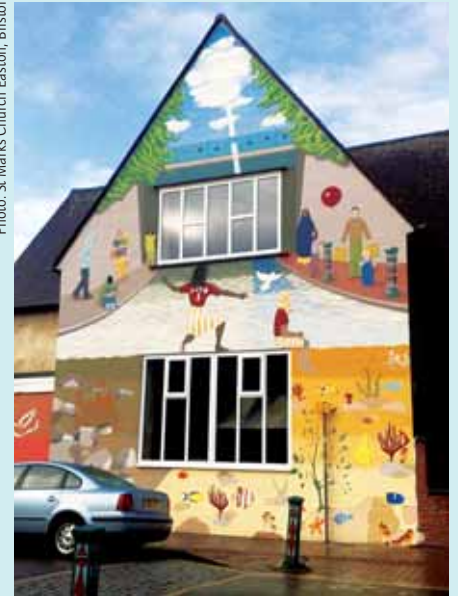
Jesus brings to your life.'

According to Jo, the area around the church is 'a hotbed of artistic activity and political radicalism' – and murals play an important role in street art. 'The final image will include a net thrown towards the fish shop across the road, which has its own fishing mural,' she added.

'We see it as a springboard to further relationships with the artists – as well as a talking point with people of other faiths.'

Work on the mural will be brought to fulfilment over the next few years – subject to funding.

Photo: St Marks Church, Easton, Bristol



taking a different approach in a non-book culture,' said Rob.

Kate arrived at St Mark's in Wythenshawe six years ago. It didn't take her long to discover traditional Bible study wasn't working. 'People were very honest and said they were scared of the Bible,' she recalled. 'We realised we are a verbal church rather than a literate church.'

So together they decided to break out of the book culture. A first step was giving vent to people's creativity bubbling under the surface. Now, worship might involve scrapbooking and prayer might produce bread-dough crosses.

Next, Kate helped people see the Bible as a living text with relevance and resonance for their daily lives. She talked about 'the remembered Bible', encouraging people to tell each other about Scripture, rather than read it.

Now Kate frequently challenges her congregation to confront difficult issues in society and culture – and put the Bible at the heart of the debate. So, in June, Sunday worship was given over to debating films –

including the popular *Harry Potter*.

This approach is risky and uncomfortable for some. But Kate is unrepentant. 'If the Bible isn't connected with our life, it's meaningless,' she said. 'It's all about growing people's confidence in their relationship with God.'

It's also about sharing that same passion with others beyond the Sunday regulars. And it seems to be working. The monthly 'Messy Church' – an eclectic mix of children and adults drawn from an eclectic community who eat, create and play together on a Saturday – is now as large as the Sunday congregation.

'Sharing our gifts is part of how God wires us to reach out to others,' said Kate. Building people's confidence in the Bible is also the primary aim of the *Biblefresh* campaign, which has won the backing of more than 40 organisations.

In addition, the scheme aims to develop people's knowledge and understanding of the Bible and to enable translation projects around the world. *Biblefresh* ends in 2011 with a year-long focus on helping people re-

engage with Scripture in all its richness.

The launch is next spring, with a roadshow bringing high-profile 'Bible champions' – like Bishop of Durham Rt Revd NT Wright and Bible Society's Director of Programme Ann Holt – to theological colleges across England and Wales during 2010.

'Bible study has been a bit prescriptive in that you're supposed to get up early and have a quiet time,' said Rob, 'but for many that hasn't worked. The potential for renewing the Church's passion for the Bible is very exciting. As people engage with Scripture, God will engage with them.'

• **Seren Boyd** is a freelance journalist.

Scripture for your street

Communities can make sense of Scripture – that's the belief shared by Bible Society staff and New Testament expert Dr Louise Lawrence.

They met recently to develop a better understanding of contextualisation – which means balancing Scripture translation with the need to use language and ideas that resonate

with individuals within local communities.

Newlyn fishermen had a surprising take on the parable of Jesus calming the storm. Supporters can read more about them and the importance of knowing how other people understand the Bible and apply their own cultural ideas to the process at www.biblsociety.org.uk/fleshouttheword

Act!

JOIN UP

Register for the Biblefresh project at www.biblefresh.com in January 2010 when the website goes live.

PRAY

Pray for Biblefresh – see Prayer Bulletin 8 – 14 November

BE DIFFERENT

Think outside the box, and look at traditional well-worn stories from another angle

BE INCLUSIVE

Let your fellowship have a go themselves with storytelling or drama

BE UNDERSTOOD

£70 could 'feed' thousands with a new language account of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000.

Lights on a cruel landscape

Bibles are booming in a place of persecution. Hazel Southam shares the story of Indian churches under attack

Rising persecution is making the Scriptures even more precious in India – just as the country's own Bible Society celebrates its 200th anniversary.

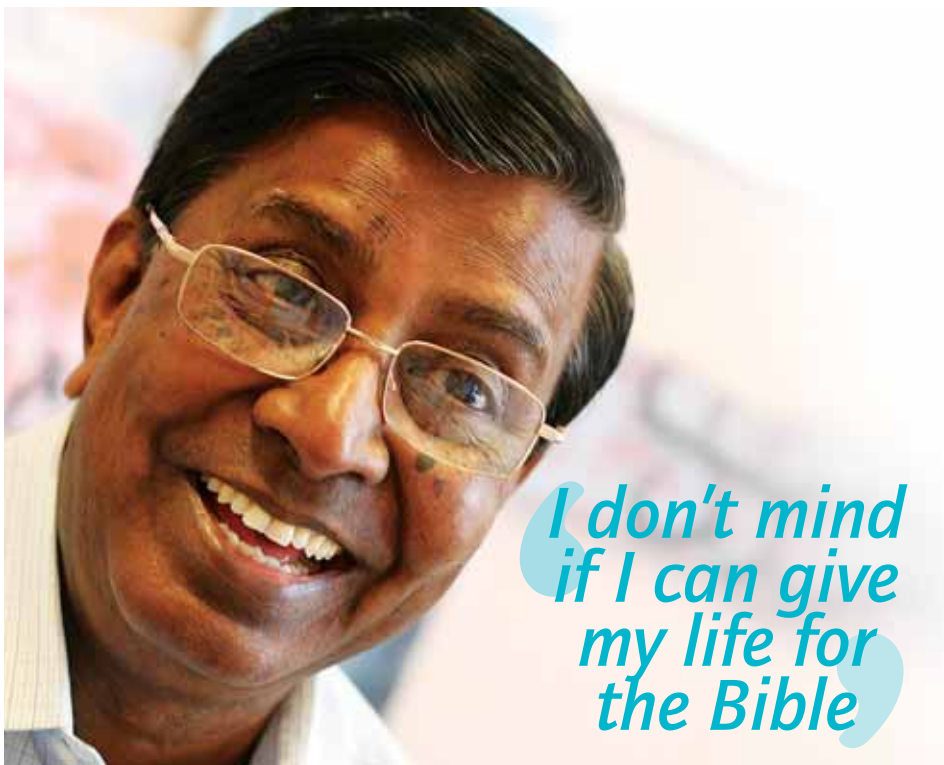
Increasing opposition has led not only to churches and Christians being attacked – but also Bibles being burned in the streets. Yet amid the persecution, or perhaps because of it, the number of Bibles produced is increasing every year.

This year [2009] the Bible Society of India printed some two million Bibles, two million New Testaments and around 33 million Bible Portions.

Every year that number grows, with new translation projects being started and a massive fund-raising campaign in India to hand out Bibles in 2010. Why is the demand for Scripture growing as persecution increases?

'Owning a Bible in India has become more precious because of the persecution,' said the Bible Society of India's General Secretary, Dr B K Pramanik.

'People want to know what's so precious about the Bible that people want to read it despite the threats. People want to see



'Bibles are precious in India', says Dr Pramanik.

I don't mind if I can give my life for the Bible

what's there. They're curious. And that encourages us to keep going.

'The Word of God has always been attacked. Yet God has a way of doing things. Because of the tremendous church growth, the demand for Bibles has gone up. People want to read the Bible more.

'We find that from prisoners, prostitutes and AIDS sufferers, there is a real demand to read the Bible. That shows there's a hunger for the Word of God.'

India is the world's second most populous country with Hinduism its main religion. Yet the country's legislation allows for freedom of religion for minorities such as Christianity.

However, the reality is often different, with seven states passing anti-conversion laws and an increase in inter-religious violence.

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the last four months of 2008 saw 'the worst spate of "communal violence" ever faced by the Christian community in post-independence India'.

Seventy Christians were reportedly killed, with more than 50 missing and some 50,000

Act!

PRAY

Pray for Orissa's Christian community – Prayer Bulletin page 6 – 12 December

ADD

Prayers from the Prayer Bulletin to your church prayers

CHECK

Check out Bible Society's new website for worldwide Bible news www.biblesociety.org.uk

people being displaced from their homes.

Dr Pramanik has received death threats because of his work. 'I've received threats by phone calls and letters,' he said. 'They say, 'If you don't stop printing Bibles we will kill you.'

'My life is under threat but I'm not afraid. Anything can happen,' he adds. 'I'm prepared for that eventuality. I don't mind if I can give my life for the Bible.'

• **Hazel Southam** is a freelance journalist and Sunday Telegraph columnist.

Fact

DESECRATED

Thousands of Christians have been attacked and made homeless, their churches vandalised and destroyed

DESTROYED

Bibles and Scriptures have been destroyed – but Bible Society of India is giving Bibles and practical help to the sufferers.



Mountain movers

Bible Society staff are following the Good Samaritan's example – and climbing Kilimanjaro. *Mike Hollow* reports

He crossed the road – and changed someone's life. Now two Bible Society staff aim to follow in the Good Samaritan's footsteps, but taking a slightly tougher route. They're climbing a mountain in Tanzania.

And it's no ordinary mountain – the peak in Jamie Hill and Ed Powell's sights is Kilimanjaro, the highest in Africa. At two-thirds the height of Everest, this is no picnic. *Comic Relief* celebrities who scaled it in March 2009 had to battle injury, vertigo and altitude sickness on their way to the top.

So why is Bible Society picking up the challenge? It's an ambitious move to help young people in the England and Wales see the powerful way the Bible can change lives – something the Bible Society of Tanzania's *Good Samaritan* programme is doing in communities where HIV has touched many families.

'People with HIV are rejected by those around them,' said Bible Society's Youth Development Officer Jamie Hill. 'The *Good Samaritan* team uses the Scriptures to help

Fact

SUFFERING

Eight per cent of Tanzanian adults have HIV/AIDS

TRAINING

In 2008 Bible Society of Tanzania ran 46 training workshops attended by a total of almost 1,100 people

LEARNING

The Good Samaritan programme is widely used in Africa.

Photo: Ed Powell



Stephen says, 'The Good Samaritan programme helps me depend fully on God.'

people see they need to love and care for them, not reject them. Their work changes things – it restores people with HIV to a place of belonging and community.'

Jamie and Ed plan to climb all 5,892 metres (19,331 feet) of Mt Kilimanjaro in early 2010 to raise money for the project. But they have even bigger things in mind.

'We'll be using the climb to get young people engaged with what the Bible Society of Tanzania is doing,' said Jamie, 'by sharing what we experience through the internet. We want everyone to take a look at our site on www.biblesociety.org.uk/rushliveitgiveit and find out all about it.

'Then in a year or two we'll take a group to do the climb themselves, so they can see the Bible renewing lives and making a real difference to people today. When they get back, we want them to tell everyone what they've seen.'

For those who go, it will be a once in a lifetime opportunity. But Jamie is looking for

Act!

TEACHING

Supply a teacher with material for a Scripture-based Good Samaritan workshop for £5

PRAYING

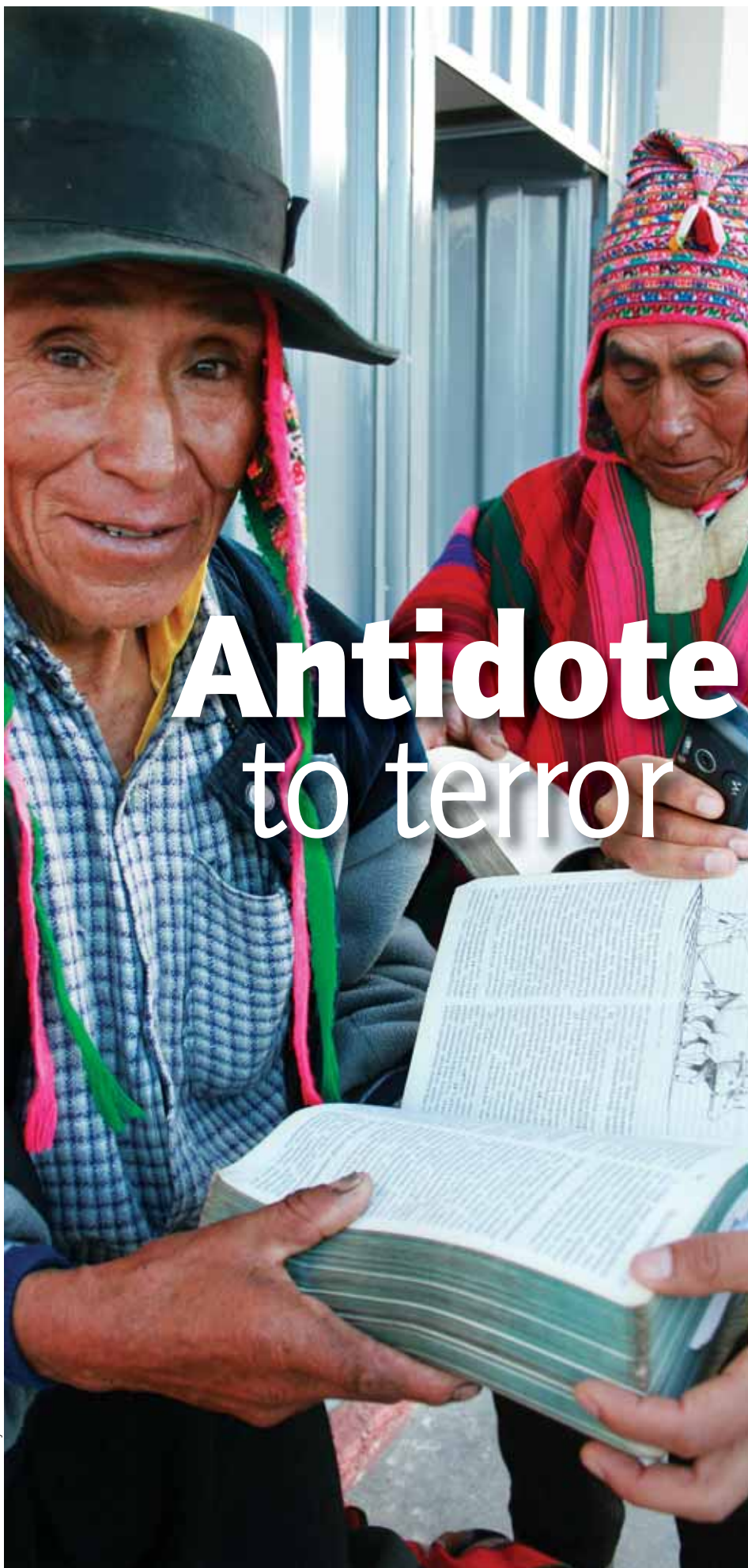
Pray for Tanzania's HIV/AIDS sufferers and those who support

FOLLOWING

Follow Jamie and Ed's Kilimanjaro blog at www.biblesociety.org.uk/rushliveitgiveit

a much wider impact. 'Hopefully it will begin a real push for this generation to get back into God's Word, to wrestle with it, love it, consume it and have it consume them,' he said. 'That's the dream. Then they can change the world for someone else.'

• **Mike Hollow** is an author and journalist.



Roque Fernandez Castro with his Quechua Bible. Published in 1987 it needs updating with more Spanish words.

Antidote to terror

The Bible became a community's hope when terrorists attacked their Peruvian idyll. *Claire Smith* tells the story of the Quechua people

When terrorists attacked this Peruvian community, it was Scripture that sustained them. But now their Quechua Bible needs revising.

If you climb the spectacular Andes mountains of Peru's Ayacucho region, you may well find a group of 24 Quechua people worshipping in a dark church made of mud walls and a tin roof.

Pastor Efrain Navarro, leader of *Iglesia Huaychao*, the village church, holds up his Bible and prays. 'In this Bible, we know God speaks to us,' he says. 'In this Bible, we learn about God's protection.'

His words carry a powerful resonance, because just 20 years ago, his village was ravaged by terrorism and conflict. Guerillas of the Maoist Shining Path movement, which originated in Ayacucho, swept through the region, terrorising, raping and killing local people.

Thousands were murdered, many more fled their homes, and Christians were targeted as

Fact

PROCESS

Revising the Ayacucho Bible is a four-year project - with 14 of the Old Testament books already revised

PLANS

Plans are to reach 50,000 Ayacucho Quechuans over six years

PARLANCE

Spanish and Quechua are the two official languages, and the New Testament has been published in more than 40 Peruvian languages.



Photo: Peruvian Bible Society

Fiesta of faith

Party time came to Huánuco, central Peru – with the promise of a complete new Bible in an Inca language.

The recent *fiesta* marked the signing of an agreement for the publication of the Scriptures in Huallaga Quechua, currently spoken by 50,000 in the region.

The project includes the new Bible and support for literacy initiatives promoting Bible-reading among Huallaga Quechua speakers. Translators and linguists are working on the final text and the complete Bible is due for publication next year.

'Until now the complete Bible has been published in the Cusco Quechua, Ayacucho Quechua and Aymara languages,' said

Pablo Gutierrez of the Peruvian Bible Society.

'The New Testament has been published in more than 40 local languages spoken in Peru. But it's more than 20 years since the publication of a new complete Bible in another Peruvian language was undertaken.'

Bishop of Huánuco Mgr Jaime Rodriguez Salazar was unequivocal about the value of the publication. 'The Bible in Huallaga Quechua restores our identity to

us,' he said.

'It teaches us to rediscover and to value the riches of our culture. We're thankful to all the organisations that are making it possible for the message of salvation and hope to reach our people.'

Agencies taking part in the project include SIL, the Peruvian Bible Society, the Quechua association JAWCA, the American Bible Society and the Seed Company.

▶ they took a stand against the violence. 'To serve God during those years was very difficult,' said Efrain. 'Many times when the terrorists came, they confiscated our Bibles. Some were burned and some were thrown into the river.'

'They told us that if we kept coming to church, they would blow us up with dynamite. On many occasions while we were worshipping, people came and warned us the terrorists were coming. We prayed to God in those moments.'

Those that fled forged temporary homes in caves round Ayacucho. Others travelled further to Peru's capital Lima, living in rambling shanty towns on the city's outskirts. Only now are people beginning to return to the mountains.

Efrain, a farmer and pastor, never left his home during the 20-year conflict. As he flicks through horrific photos showing death, terror and the intimidating presence of the Shining Path soldiers, he said, 'To keep remembering those years is very painful. We lost many Christians and members of our congregation.'

The Bible sustained the community. And they pictured God 'like a chicken protecting his chicks' said one churchgoer. For Efrain, it was his lifeline. 'Our faith in the Lord was firm even during those difficult times. We were prepared to die for our faith but God kept us well.'

Today the Bible translation that brought hope to the Quechua people is fast becoming out of date, even though it was only published in 1987.

The huge migration of people triggered by the Shining Path encouraged more Spanish words into the language, as mountain people arrived in the cities and were influenced by television and radio.

Now Efrain and his community are waiting

for a new, revised Quechua Bible, which they will be able to understand better – and which will allow them to hear God's voice more clearly.

They don't talk about the Shining Path, but they don't forget. They look forward to a future where Scripture shapes the region, and where the horrors of the 80s and 90s can never be repeated.

'The Quechua Bible is now being used by the authorities here,' said Efrain. 'They're learning now to administer justice, because the Bible talks about equality and justice. This Bible is very important for us. In this Bible, we can know God.'

• **Claire Smith** is Bible Society's Head of Communications.

In this Bible, we learn about God's protection

Act!

PRAY

Pray for translation teams to be encouraged. Prayer Bulletin 21 – 28 February

JOIN

Join Bible a Month and fund a Bible – at www.biblesociety.org.uk/bam

SUPPORT

Send £30 to help the story of the Sower to be translated

INVITE

Invite friends for a film night – raise funds by selling them a snack.

Students log on to Scripture

Thousands of teachers and students have been tapping into an online resource that helps them accomplish such tasks as write essays, understand Chaucer – and appreciate the Bible's impact on their world.

They were clicking onto the unique *Crossref-it* website. Partly funded by Bible Society, this one-stop shop offers easy-to-understand background information for AS/A2 English Literature.

The former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion has said, 'Poor knowledge of the Bible limits understanding of a whole raft of literary work'. And *The Guardian* claims *Crossref-it* is the only aid that helps solve this problem.

The need for deeper understanding is great.



According to a study by St John's College, Durham, although 75 per cent of respondents owned a Bible, as few as 10 per cent understood the main characters and their relevance.

But *Crossref-it* directs students to the facts. Ten clear text guides – relevant to the current

exam syllabus – cover literature from Chaucer to Dickens. Five more texts will go online by spring 2011.

By the summer term of 2009, as many as 1,000 people a day were visiting the completely redesigned and free-to-access site. Users are consistent in their praise for its clarity and simplicity.

Teachers will find downloadable resources. Students can get summaries and commentaries. There are weekly blogs and social networking buttons – along with advice on how to write a successful essay or analyse text and deal with exam questions. Visit www.crossref-it.info to find out for yourself.

Bibles breach language barrier

Churches face the challenge of reaching different nationalities on their doorstep – and now there's a supply line to help them.

Bible Society Resources website offers Scriptures in more than 70 different languages. Options range from Chinese to Czech and Shona to Sanskrit – in both traditional and contemporary translations.

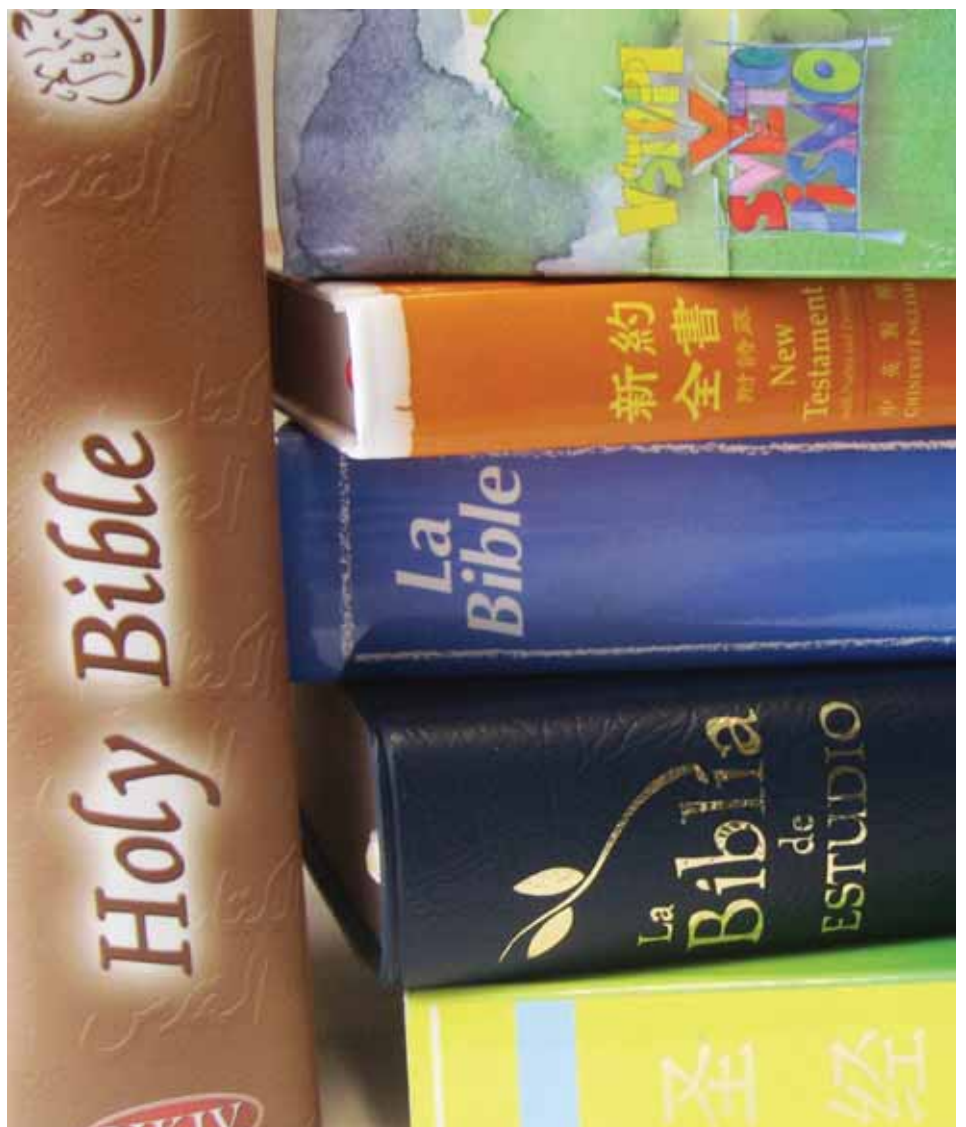
All this is possible because for 200 years, Bible Society supporters have helped pay for innumerable translations – and now some are available for purchase in this country.

Hopes are this will help not only students – but also churches reaching out to ethnic communities. The Scriptures are available in most European languages – and many of the more popular immigrant languages.

Some Bibles, like the Portuguese *Capuchinhos* edition, include the deuterocanonical books. Others versions are dual language, such as Polish/English or Japanese/English.

At present, running top of the list are – French, Polish, Tigrinya (Ethiopia), Chinese, Russian, Tagalog (Philippines), Amharic (Ethiopia), Spanish, Persian, Arabic, Swahili, Romanian and Portuguese.

Sometimes languages not listed on the website can also be obtained. For further details visit www.bibleresources.org.uk to see the full range of non-English Scriptures stocked.



quotes

Photo: Captain Charles Deogratias



Word for warriors

'Never in the last seven years of my military career have I seen soldiers request Bibles to read like they are doing now in Afghanistan.'

- **Charles Deogratias**, Canadian military chaplain.

Bible saves Bear

'I depend on a few simple Bible verses every day that have helped me through so many tough times.'

- **Bear Grylls**, explorer, adventurer and Chief Scout, Scout Association.



Photo: PA Photos

Bible people

Bible for breakfast

More than 3,000 miles later, he brought five Nigerian politicians to the mother of all parliaments.

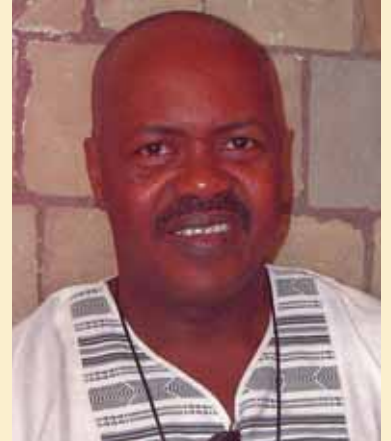
But such a trek was nothing for Bible Society of Nigeria's General Secretary Revd Dr Fred Odutola. 'I'm excited about what could happen,' he said.

Fred led the group to attend the annual National Prayer Breakfast at Westminster - which drew about 700 parliamentarians and others working in politics. The aim is to pray and read the Bible together.

Following the July 2009 event, there are plans for Nigeria's parliament to hold a National Prayer Breakfast in October 2010 - and Bible Society of Nigeria plans to distribute Bibles to all of the country's politicians to tie in with it.

Fred hopes prayer and the Bible will help politicians resist corruption, which is endemic within Nigeria. 'It's easy for politicians to be swept away by the stream of affluence,' he said.

'There are so many allowances they



Revd Dr Fred Odutola has big plans.

can claim for - it's easy for them to forget where they came from and who they are. Next year, we'll be giving them Bibles and saying, "This is the Word of God, use it as a compass in governance."

The Bible could help Nigerian politicians 'not to be afraid to let their light shine and let the gospel show in their lives,' he added. 'We're getting people to see the reality of the Bible and its importance.'

1 verse

Staying calm

The Lord said to Isaiah, 'Take your son Shear Jashub, and go to meet King Ahaz. You will find him on the road where the cloth makers work, at the end of the ditch that brings water from the upper pool. Tell him to keep alert, to stay calm, and not to be frightened or disturbed.' Isaiah 7.3-4 GNB

I came upon this verse seemingly by chance more than a decade ago. King Ahaz and Judah, the country that he rules, are under threat from the Syrian army. War, death and destruction look imminent. Isaiah reports that 'all his people were so terrified that they trembled like trees shaking in the wind'.

Into that pre-war terror comes a very clear message not to worry - and subsequently, that all will be well. But it's the staying calm bit that appealed to me.

My work has taken me on some very dodgy foreign assignments over the years, where it's been easy to be afraid and not so easy to stay calm. In the disputed Caucasian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh I

found myself interviewing an arms dealer at 5 am.

In Israel I was repeatedly warned off interviewing Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli nuclear whistle-blower, but went ahead with the report despite the fact that the last journalist to meet him had been held for several days by the security services.

But it's not just at these high-adrenaline times that I've found this verse incredibly helpful. It's a daily reminder for me when worried about money, health, work or family, not to panic.

And of course, it works, when I calm down I think more clearly and can cope better and in my experience, God can get through to me more.

• **Hazel Southam** is a freelance journalist.

