



Garvin Moss, 52 is one of the storytellers who brings the Bible to life at Rowde CofE Primary School.



Photo © Bible Society/Layton Thompson

COME WITH US, IN THIS ISSUE, TO WILTSHIRE. That's right Wiltshire... you may have already heard that Bible Society teamed up with Open the Book last year and we're now helping Open the Book expand into more schools.

So what's it all about? Claire Smith went back to school in Wiltshire and you can read her eyewitness report on how the Bible is being opened up for school children right across England and Wales.

Meanwhile, In South Sudan, you can read an update from Edward Kajivora on the work he is doing in offering the Bible and practical help to refugees who have been displaced by the on-going conflict in Juba.

Please pray for this work and thank you for the part that you play in making the Bible heard.

John Ranford Bible a Month Co-ordinator



By Claire Smith

I'M SITTING IN A SCHOOL HALL with 180 children. It's a Church of England school in rural Wiltshire, and the headteacher is asking who knows the story of Daniel and the lions' den.

There's a show of hands. Only about 20 children are familiar with the story.

And that's where Bible Society's new project, Open the Book comes in.

In September last year, Bible Society merged with Open the Book, a project which takes Scripture into schools through local volunteers, who retell Bible stories during assembly times. Not long afterwards, I was dispatched

to report on the project in three schools – meeting children, volunteers, church leaders and headteachers.

The experience was, quite honestly, great fun. Time and again I heard the same thing about Open the Book. Volunteers love it because of the team spirit, and the connection with the children. Headteachers love it because it's another link with the community – and it's one less assembly for them to do each week. Ministers love it because it reaches hundreds of children who might never attend a church. And children, well, they just love it.

At Rowde CofE Primary School, the head



Bible Society in focus

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD EVAN HAS JUST DISCOVERED – for the first time in his life – that the Bible is great. He's discovered that it's fun, that the stories are exciting, and sometimes a bit strange, and have things to teach him about his life.

Who do you think brought the Bible to life for him in this way? His teachers? His parents? His friends? His Sunday school?

No. It was people like you and me. Ordinary people from an ordinary church, who are part of an extraordinary project – called Open the Book.

We want every child to hear the story of the Bible at school in their primary years. That means getting into all 18,280 primary schools in England and Wales – and reaching all 4.5 million pupils.

That's where you come in – if there's not already an Open the Book group in your area, we'd love to invite you to encourage your church to get involved. Visit biblesociety.org.uk/openthebook and download your church pack. It includes all the resources you need to encourage your church to set up an Open the Book group.

There may already be an Open the Book team in your area, Call us on **01793 418222** and find out how you can get involved.



Photo © Bible Society/Layton Thompson

Seven-year-old Evan loves hearing the Bible's stories brought to life by an Open the Book team.

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welcomes the Open the Book team to the front. The volunteers have picked eight children to help them tell the story of Daniel. There's laughter when the script talks about the lions wanting to eat Daniel for breakfast, and cheers when Daniel is spared. Afterwards there's a reflection, and a short prayer which children can 'make their own' by saying amen.

I chat later to eight-year-old Callum, who played a soldier. He hadn't heard many Bible stories before Open the Book came to his school, but he told me, 'Bible stories are good because they teach you things. The story of David and Goliath was about being brave, and Jonah and the whale tells us you should do what people ask you to do.'

He added, 'When you read the story, sometimes you forget it and have to read it again. But when you act it out, it stays in your head.'

There are so many things I could tell you about Open the Book. The magic of children's imaginations – where a simple prop transforms a person – or the lovely sense of passing on a narrative to the next generation, or the astonishing detail in which children could retell Bible stories they'd heard years ago.

But a comment made by volunteer Sue Hughes really stuck with me.

'To get a group of elderly people, dressed up in bed sheets and with tea towels on their heads, and get them to share the Bible with children...' she said. 'If you were sitting in a strategy meeting, you would never come up with this. It shouldn't work. But the fact that it does suggests it must be God's plan.'



Photo © Bible Society/Layton Thompson

Eight-year-old Callum joins in with the Open the Book team as a soldier in the Bible story of Daniel and the Lions den.

AT THE START OF THIS YEAR we shared with you Edward Kajivora, General Secretary of Bible Society in South Sudan's vision for sharing God's word in this fledgling country. And then war broke out. But Edward made the decision to stay in his county, even though many people fled.

His rapid response – made possible by your support – means that around 2,000 families are being offered the Bible alongside packages of food.

'Life in the camps is very difficult since they live on handouts' says Edward, 'an elderly man told me; it is a shame for an old man to stand in line for food. He was waiting for harvest when he was forced to leave. He burst into tears!'

'You can see children moving around and picking up the remains of anything edible, just to fill their bellies,' he said.

Almost 1 million people have been displaced and a third of the population needs food, according to UN figures.

Edward said, 'in the camp, we come face to face with human needs, ranging from basic water and food to sanitation. But the real need we encountered was that of inner healing.'

'I told them...our brother and sisters in the Lord around the world, heard about your sufferings. They are praying for you. We prayed together and I felt Bible Society has contributed greatly in saving physical and spiritual lives.'

Edward and his team are committed to opening up the Bible for people in South Sudan as the country rebuilds. He said, 'thank you for your continued thoughts and prayers... please continue to pray for the situation in South Sudan.'



Photo © Bible Society/Clare Kendall

Edward has already started helping refugees in Juba. Now he's hoping to launch Bible Work in South Sudan.

Bible a month

April 2014

Thank you for helping others to encounter the Bible.

ENGLAND and WALES

Photo © Bible Society/Layton Thompson



Dianne Brookes is Open the Book's National Coordinator, based at Bible House in Swindon.

A QUARTER OF A MILLION CHILDREN are hearing the Bible's stories in school through Open the Book, but there's still a long way to go.

Our vision is for every child to hear the story of the Bible at school in

their primary years. It means getting into all 18,280 primary schools in England and Wales – and reaching all 4.5 million pupils. For that to happen, more volunteers are needed.

'Jesus was probably the best storyteller ever,' said Open the Book National Coordinator Dianne Brookes. 'We're just continuing what Jesus did. It's something deep within us, we all need to hear and tell stories. If anyone is interested in starting an Open the Book group, get in touch and we can send you information and provide training.'

Teams of between five and seven volunteers follow a programme of themed and dramatised Bible stories, around 10 minutes long, which fit comfortably into assembly times in schools. There are 105 stories, designed to be delivered weekly over three years. To find out more, visit biblesociety.org.uk/openthebook

To discover other ways of making the Bible heard visit biblesociety.org.uk

Bible a month

May 2014

Thank you for your faithful prayers.

VIETNAM

Photo © Bible Society/Grace Smith



An elderly lady from Phuc Tien, Vietnam, welcomes the Bible to her village.

'HOPE IS IN OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN – may God bless the future generations. I pray that you will continue to make the Word of God accessible to us. Thank you God!' These are the words of an elderly Vietnamese lady to the Bible Society team who arrived in her village, Phuc Tien, to distribute Scriptures.

The visit was part of a national

project which will see 60,000 Bibles, 30,000 New Testaments and 70,000 Scripture portions handed out to Vietnamese Christians too poor to buy their own copy. It's essential in a country that – while it is one of the emerging economies of South East Asia – there are still pockets of poverty, particularly among ethnic minorities.

In fact, some 80 per cent of the Bibles in Vietnam are provided by Bible Society through your support. Since Bible Society starting working in Vietnam in 1992, around one million Bibles and 2.2 million New Testaments have been distributed there.

The Church in Vietnam is one of the fastest-growing in the world, and Christians now account for around 12 per cent of the population (according to Church sources). It's legal for Christians to meet and worship, but restrictions do remain and many continue to be wary of the authorities.

PRAYER POINTERS

- For the expansion of Open the Book, so that the Bible will be offered in creative, lively and engaging ways to more children in primary schools across the country.
- For the Open the Book team, Dianne, Julie and Val. They work to publicise the project, deal with enquiries, register and train new volunteers, and support around 10,000 existing Bible storytellers. Pray for them as the project grows.
- Give thanks for all those involved in opening up the Bible to schoolchildren through this project, especially those who have been storytelling in schools for many years.
- For Callum (see eyewitness report) and all the children at Rowde CofE Primary School, who are discovering new things about the Bible every week.

PRAYER POINTERS

- For Christians in the village of Phuc Tien, who received Bibles thanks to your regular gift. Pray they will read the Bibles, engage with the stories, and discover ways to apply what they learn to their own lives.
- Give thanks that large-scale Bible distribution projects do happen in Vietnam, despite the challenges. Pray for the team in Vietnam – for safety, protection and wisdom in their work.
- Give thanks that the Church in Vietnam continues to grow. Pray for Arun Sok Nhep, who leads Bible Society's work in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.
- For Bible work in Laos, which neighbours Vietnam to the north west. Bible Society in Laos was established in 1965, but was disrupted in 1975. Currently, there's no formal Bible Society in the country – but Scripture translation and production takes place thanks to a partnership between United Bible Societies (our umbrella organisation) and local churches.

Bible a month

April 2014

'We will not keep them from our children; we will tell the next generation about the Lord's power and his great deeds and the wonderful things he has done.'

Psalms 78.4 (GNB)

ENGLAND and WALES FACTFILE



Area: 151,156 sq km approx. 62% of the UK.

Population: 56,164,000 approx. 86% of the UK pop.

Literacy: 99%

Languages: English, Welsh, Cornish (regional language)

Bible a month

Club Corner

Look out soon for our new Big Mission campaign. We believe children have the right to encounter the Bible. We want to ensure they have the opportunity to do so, because we know the Bible is more than just words; lives are transformed by it.



Our heart is to open up the Bible for 20 million children around the world by 2020. We'll do this through Bible apps, new language translations, Bible distribution, Bible reading in schools, literacy programmes, film and much more.

The campaign launches at Spring Harvest this year – where we are also the main sponsors of the event. Please pray for people to join the new campaign. Please pray that people's hearts will be stirred to join the Big Mission, and that more people around the world, particularly children, will have the opportunity to encounter the Bible.

To find out more about The Big Mission, visit biblesociety.org.uk/bigmission

To submit your story to Club Corner, please email bamc@biblesociety.org.uk or write to us at the address at the bottom of the page. Your Club Corner story may be edited and we cannot guarantee its inclusion. Please ensure you include a return address so we can return any materials.

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To discover other ways of making the Bible heard visit biblesociety.org.uk

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Bible a month

May 2014

'I lift up my hands to you in prayer; like dry ground my soul is thirsty for you.'

Psalms 143.6 (GNB)

VIETNAM FACTFILE



Area: 331,210 sq km approx. 30% larger than the UK.

Population: 92,477,857 approx. 30% more than the UK.

Literacy: 93.4%

Languages: Vietnamese (official), English, French, Chinese, and Khmer, mountain area languages (Mon-Khmer and Malayo-Polynesian)

Bible a month

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **Cambodia and Congo Brazzaville**

Thank you so much for your faithful support. We understand that for some it is still a difficult economic climate so we want to make it easy for you to be giving at a level that is right for you. If you are paying by direct debit and would like to change your gift, please just indicate your new gift amount below, sign it and return to us at the address at the bottom of this prayer letter. Alternatively, please call us on 01793 418222.

I would like to change my monthly gift to

Please sign here.....

If you are giving by standing order and would like to change your gift amount, please call us on 01793 418222.