



Tamar (left) with the Bible Society stand at a bookfair.



IT WAS WONDERFUL to meet and talk with lots of *Bible a Month* supporters at Spring Harvest. We were also greatly blessed that so many new people decided to join. Whether this is your first issue of *Bible a Month* or your fiftieth, we are so thankful for your support.

Here at our offices in Swindon we are very fortunate to have colleagues from around the world come to visit us. We share tips, training and stories with each other. It is always a blessing to catch up with our colleagues from other countries. Recently Elaine Quek, from the Bible Society of Singapore, was with us for two weeks for training and a conference. Hear all about her experience in this issue's *In Focus* article.

After the tragic bombings in Lahore, the General Secretary of Pakistan writes to tell us that the Christians there, although persecuted, are resilient.

Are you volunteering at Mary Jones World this summer? Did you attend the Great Bible Bake in your area? Don't forget to let us know how it went by writing into *Club Corner*.

John Ranford
Bible a Month Co-ordinator



Photo © Bible Society of Turkey



by Tamar Karasu, General Secretary of Bible Society in Turkey

I TOOK OVER AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF BIBLE SOCIETY IN TURKEY IN 2003. It took about a year to happen, because there were many objections: I'm a woman, an Armenian and I was just 27. When I was told about the objections, I said, 'I want this job!'

When I joined I realised that sharing the Bible here is a challenge. There's no law saying you can't distribute the Bible, or share your beliefs in Turkey. But when you do, you see barriers going up between people. It's not illegal, but

it's not welcomed or accepted. From a young age, people here are taught that the Bible is corrupted, so there's a lot to undo before we can speak about Scripture.

Today, we have six staff serving the 100,000 Christian population – but there are 81 million people in Turkey and we need to engage with them.

One of our key projects is to go into Islamic theological faculties and speak to students as part of their classes on



Bible Society in focus

'LOVELY WEATHER IT IS TODAY.'

I found it interesting that conversations in the UK would usually begin with comments about the weather whereas in Singapore, where I come from, conversations would revolve around food. It often begins with the question, 'Have you eaten?'

My desire to visit the founding Bible Society after hearing so much about it was fulfilled in March. When I arrived, it was like finally meeting a 'big brother' who has been taking care of me from afar even though we had never met face-to-face. Through this experience, I was blessed with new friends whom I learnt plenty from.

Even though I met most of the colleagues for the first time, I felt a bond that was not defined by distance, race or age – the common vision to make God's Word available, accessible and credible to everyone was evident. I was thrilled to hear about their best practices and was glad to share about our varying methods to spread God's Word in South-East Asia where many don't have access to the Bible.

In multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore, our main work is to equip the Church and engage Christians to deepen their faith. The audience in the UK differs from ours; their challenge is to make the Word relevant to a post-Church society. Despite these differences, I'm excited to see how we can work together to fulfil the Bible mission.

Please join me in prayer for our colleagues to think of creative ways to equip the Church and Christians in Singapore and South-East Asia.

Elaine Quek, Assistant Manager, Communications & Media Centre, The Bible Society of Singapore



Photo © Elaine Quek

Elaine visited some of our projects, here with a local Open the Book team.



religious history. Young people have thousands of questions about the Bible. We are usually given a one-hour slot, but often we'll still be answering questions three hours later – and the students will stay for as long as we're there.

They ask about the authenticity of the Bible and about Jesus' claims to be the Son of God. They ask about the Trinity and about forgiveness. They ask about different denominations and all the versions and translations of the Bible. Our team are highly trained, and we answer questions peacefully, politely and with grace. We have to be like Jesus, even if we sometimes face threats or abuse.

We give out around 2,000 copies of the Bible a year as part of these visits and many students come to see us at

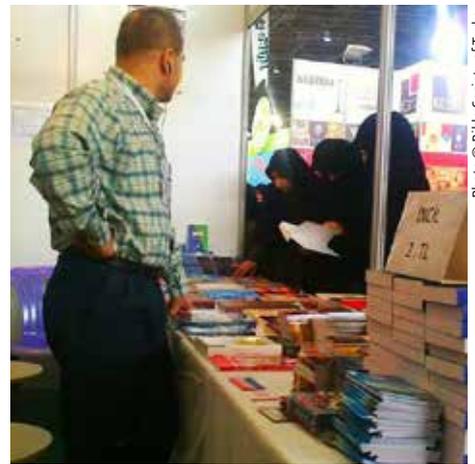


Photo © Bible Society of Turkey

Young Islamic students have thousands of questions about the Bible.

bookfairs and at our bookshop as a result.

I can't tell you how powerful these conversations are. Of everything we do, I see God at work through these conversations with young Muslims.

LAHORE CHURCH BOMBING

Anthony Aijaz Lamuel, General Secretary of the Bible Society of Pakistan.

When two suicide bombers blew themselves up outside churches in Lahore in March, I was at church just across town. My phone kept ringing during the service. At first I ignored it.

We left the service and raced across town. It was chaos. It was very very sad, as you can imagine. We didn't know how many had been injured or had been killed.

Then came the news that people we knew had stopped the suicide bombers from entering the churches. They didn't recognise them and stopped them going in.

One blessing has been that though we lost 15 lives and 78 people were injured, it would have been more like 400 or 500 if they had got into the churches, which were packed.

As a Christian community, we are shaken. We are upset. But this will not stop us worshipping. Christians make up just two per cent of the largely Muslim population here in Pakistan. The mood among Christians is resilient. Persecutions we can take. But we have to be present in Pakistan's society and we have to make our presence known.

Violence like that at the church bombings is repellent to many moderate Muslims within Pakistan and so many are asking why extremists resort to killing.

We are always under threat of attack. Last year a local newspaper headline read, 'Burn Bible Society'. Our offices are surrounded by razor wire and concrete crash barriers. Every visitor goes through a scanner and has to leave their bags outside. The corridor that leads to my office is made of reinforced concrete and steel. Fifteen security cameras guard the premises. There is a fear in my mind that wasn't there 20 years ago. But we are in Lahore and we will continue to try to allow the fragrance of God's hope and love to permeate the atmosphere of our country. Our distribution of Bibles among Muslims has increased amazingly.

We will never shut down. We will never close.



Photo © United Bible Societies

Anthony Aijaz Lamuel prays with Christians in Pakistan.

Bible a month

June 2015

'Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.' Matthew 28:19 (CEV)

TURKEY FACTFILE



Area: 783,562 sq km approx. 60% larger than the UK

Population: 81,619,392 approx. 30% more than the UK

Literacy: 94.1%

Languages: Turkish (official), Kurdish, other minority languages

Bible a month

Club Corner

STOP PRESS



We praise God that our staff in Nepal survived the earthquake and were able to start an emergency response through the local church networks. We are currently running an appeal to raise funds for this.

Because we have a team on the ground in Nepal, we were able to transfer funds directly over to them and they have already started putting together and distributing emergency kits. Bibles are being replaced and Scripture booklets dealing with trauma and loss will be given out.

The entire infrastructure of Bible House, in Kathmandu, is perilously balanced with severe cracks through walls. Time is needed to clear the rubble but repairs will soon start and damaged furniture and computers will eventually be replaced.

For now, our team in Nepal ask for your prayers. In particular please pray that:

- The relief effort would meet the needs of the people
- Our team would be kept safe as they clear the rubble
- The Bible would play a big part in the restoration of the nation.

As the coverage of the media moves on, please keep Nepal and our Bible Society team on the ground in your prayers. For more information and updates on our appeal please visit: biblesociety.org.uk/nepal2015

FOLD

To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit biblesociety.org.uk

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Bible a month

July 2015

'God is wonderful and glorious. I pray that his Spirit will make you become strong followers.' Ephesians 3:16 (CEV)

MYANMAR FACTFILE



Area: 676,578sq km, approx. 65% larger than the UK

Population: 53,957,000 approx. 84% of the UK pop.

Literacy: 93%

Language: Burmese, Jingpho, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan

Bible a month

Look out for your next *Bible a Month* prayer letter which will feature reports from **Ghana** and **Guatemala**.

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.

Bible a month

June 2015

Thank you for helping others to encounter the Bible.

TURKEY

Photo © Bible Society of Turkey



The Bible Society shop in Istanbul, many people stop to read the open Bible in the window.

On one of Istanbul's busiest tourist streets, in the heart of this vast city, is Bible Society's bookshop.

This small store, which has been on the same site for 40 years, has become a haven for seekers and shoppers. Around 50 people step through the doors every day and, for many, it will be the first time they have ever met a Christian. While some come to buy (the shop generates almost £2,000 income every month) many simply come to ask questions and debate with our trained staff. Others drop by to just stand and

read sections from the pulpit-size Bible propped up, always open, in the front window.

Tamar Karasu, who leads our work in Turkey, said, 'I met a Muslim woman recently who told me that whenever she feels low or needs guidance, she passes by to read the Bible in our shop window. She said she finds the words uplifting. I suppose we'll never know how many people are impacted by Scripture in this way.'

Thanks to your regular support, Tamar and her team have been able to make expansion plans for 2015. The aim this year is to open the bookshop later into the evening and employ a female member of staff to attract more female students. The team will also be visiting bookfairs in Adana, Bursa, Ankara, Izmir and Diyarbakir – and will reach around 5,000 additional people through these events.

PRAYER POINTERS

- Give thanks for Tamar and her energy, courage and dedication. Pray for wisdom as she and her small team work to challenge perceptions about the Bible in Turkey. Ask God to protect them.
- For students at Turkey's Islamic theological faculties who will meet with Bible Society staff this year (see eyewitness report). Pray they will grasp the opportunity to ask questions and will approach the Bible with an open mind. Pray for those who have become Christians, but cannot share this due to pressure from family or society.
- Around 15,000 people will enter our Istanbul bookshop this year. Pray for these people, particularly those who engage in conversation with our staff. Pray they will find answers to their questions about Scripture.
- 2015 marks 100 years since 1.5 million Armenians were killed or ejected from their historic homeland by the Ottoman government. Tamar is hoping to print a commemorative New Testament to promote forgiveness and reconciliation. Please pray for these plans.

To discover other ways in which we offer the Bible to the world visit biblesociety.org.uk

Bible a month

July 2015

Thank you for your faithful prayers.

MYANMAR

Photo © United Bible Societies



A four year-old Wa boy who recited John 1.1-18 at the launch of the new Wa Bible in eastern Myanmar.

Myanmar – also known as Burma – is still a Buddhist nation. Christians are a minority. Though a closed country for many years, it has a vibrant and well-organised Christian population. The authorities still monitor church movements carefully but the Church is strong, with Baptists alone currently numbering 1.6 million.

For years, the economic ban imposed on the country had hindered importation which led to a lack of resources, forcing the Bible Society of Myanmar (BSM) to revert to importing Bibles and Scripture materials from Thailand through an intermediary. However, over the past two years since the embargo was lifted, Bible Society sales have increased as more Bibles are allowed in.

All Bible Society programmes run in partnership with the officially recognised Church. With a growing vibrant Church, composed mostly of young adults under the age of 30, Bible Society is developing more creative ways to communicate the gospel. Scripture distribution and engagement programmes are run nationwide. In addition to printing and publishing Bibles and materials, BSM currently has 20 translation projects in progress, with three projected to be completed each year over the next six years. It also conducts a prison ministry, literacy programme and Bible reading programme.

Current political and economic developments are providing new opportunities for engagement with God's Word. The Church has the opportunity to strengthen its position and prepare for the new growth that it could experience as a result of the increased openness and tolerance of other faiths.

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray that the Bible Society of Myanmar, in cooperation with the churches and supporting organisations, can run all the translation projects effectively, so that both majority and minority ethnic people may have the Scripture in their own languages.
- Pray for the production of all of the items on time and without any hindrances.
- Pray that the Scripture-based selections will transform the lives of many people.
- Pray for the churches and Christian organisations that will be receiving these materials and that they will use them effectively in their youth ministries.
- Pray that the ethnic group may have a chance to translate the Study Bible in their own language to enable them to understand more fully the Word of God and apply it in their daily lives.