

A REQUEST FOR PRAYER... FROM TONY CROOK

FEBRUARY 2010



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Dear Praying Friends,

Welcome to the New Year.

Haiti

Give thanks that all the Bible Society staff in Haiti have been located, and whilst they all know people who have died, all our staff are safe.

All of them are committed to staying in Haiti to continue to do the job, which is quite a statement since many Haitians are desperately trying to leave the country as quickly as possible. The head of the Bible Society in Haiti has told the Fellowship that so many people are looking for answers as well as help. Approximately eighty percent of the country are Christian Catholics, with a healthy number of Protestants.

Already with the help of the Evangelical Church in the Dominican Republic, one truck holding food and water supplies has arrived in the capital and it's planned to have more trucks come in future weeks. Alongside of these will be Bibles. At present 4,000 are being prepared in Brazil and another 15,000 will be printed in Korea in coming months.



Staff of the Dominican Republic Bible Society preparing boxes of food supplies and medicines for loading into the first truck to be sent by UBS from Dominican Republic into Haiti since the earthquake of January 2010. The truck crossed the border into Haiti on Thursday, January 21.

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There will also be 200,000 portions (a Gospel or part of Scripture) and 100,000 selections from Scripture (basically A4 size leaflets). All of these are designed to be specific to the situation in Haiti and will be helpful to those who are looking for answers as well as practical help. The two buildings that the Bible Society occupied in Haiti are in terrible state. One collapsed completely and one is structurally compromised and may have to be demolished.

The staff have asked us to pray as never before and not to give up on praying as they seek to help people to find direction from the Lord in the midst of so much suffering and for them themselves that they will remain enthusiastic and positive and able to draw encouragement and assistance from the Scriptures on a daily basis for themselves in their ministry in the weeks and months ahead.

Because of the building collapse we have no Bibles in Haiti. We will need to replace them. We have opened a fund to provide Scriptures and basic assistance which will be channeled through the Bible Societies network, and if you would like to help please feel free to do so.



Sandra Markovic, Assistant to Vera Mitic, the Executive Secretary of the Bible Society in Serbia, prepares to deliver audio Scripture CDs to the Veljko Ramadanovic School for visually impaired children and young people in Zemin, Belgrade.

“This is such a wonderful place and we felt really privileged to be able to contribute to its work”

Serbia

We’ve been supporting the Bible Society in Serbia now for a couple of years and I’m thrilled to see the innovations that are now happening.

Mrs Vera Mitic recently visited a school for visually impaired children and young people. With 165

students, Veljko Ramadanovic School in the large Belgrade suburb of Zemun is the largest of its kind in the region. Here, children and young people receive specialist teaching in small classes carefully arranged to meet their particular needs. They are cared for by 75 teachers and other staff members, led by principal Radmila Laban. Those with families living locally go home at weekends, while others only return home two or three times a year.

“This is such a wonderful place and we felt really privileged to be able to contribute to its work,” says Mrs Mitic. And they brought 70 audio Scripture CDs for the children and young people to listen to. “Despite all Mrs Laban’s work, the school really struggles to obtain suitable materials for religious teaching,” explains Mrs Mitic. “So the CDs were very warmly welcomed by both staff and students.”

The original intention had been to distribute the CDs to the students on January 27, the special day of Saint Sava, the patron saint of all Serbian schools. But the oldest students at the school were not prepared to wait that long! Hearing that the CDs had been delivered, and knowing that they were about to depart for the Christmas holidays, they begged their religious education teacher to go to Mrs Laban and ask for some copies to be released early to them so that they could take them home.

Please see how important it is for children and young people to feel that they are being supported in their learning about religious matters. At present about thirty-five percent of the students attend religious education classes.

Vera Mitic and Mrs Laban also began talking about whether there was potential to work together on Braille publications, specifically producing the Gospels in Braille. This would be another means of support for religious teaching in the school itself, but would also be of interest to the visually impaired community generally. Vera Mitic finishes by saying, “We will start working in earnest on this next year. There are exciting times ahead!”

I’ve met Vera. She is a dynamic and enthusiastic woman in her late forties. She has worked for the Bible Society in the country for approximately fifteen years under her predecessor and now as the General Secretary. She now has an assistant in Sandra Markovic who is also enthusiastic and learning on the job.

Please pray for them. One of the difficulties she has is too many opportunities, but give thanks for her untiring efforts, for continued health, for safety on the roads (and, believe you me, she really does need safety on the roads!) particularly in this Winter season when temperatures 30° below and heavy snow are not unusual.

A New Leader for United Bible Societies

I’ve received a letter from David Wong who’s the Chairperson of the United Bible Societies General Secretary Search Group. He is asking that in prayerful dependence on God we may be able to find His choice for the General Secretary of United Bible Societies role which becomes vacant in January 2011 when our colleague, the Rev. Dr. A. Miller Milloy retires.

The intention is to be able to recommend an appointment of a General Secretary designate at the next Global Board meeting in May 2010.

If in your prayerful consideration you come across someone you think would be suitable, please contact me confidentially and let me know so that I may follow it through in the speediest way. Applications close in the middle of March.

Please pray that we would find God's person for this role as a fellowship of 140 Bible Societies in 200 countries is an enormous undertaking, and the work that we undertake together is of such significance that we must have God's leader for this role.

The Revised Chinese Union Version Bible

I have today received an email from the Hong Kong Bible Society indicating that late last week they completed and approved the final edit of the Revised Chinese Union version entire Bible.

The current edition is 100 years old and therefore words which were in use commonly 100 years ago are not always easily understood today.

In addition, since this edition was translated originally, simplified script has been introduced and the number of characters have therefore been reduced which has put further strain on young people in particular easily understanding the current Chinese Union version. So this is a revision of the classic edition; it holds to the original literal premise of the original translation, but in today's understandable language.

In the year ahead it will need to be typeset and have the typeset accurately checked before it is printed and distributed. We're hoping to have Mary Leung, the head of the Bible Society in Hong Kong who are sponsoring the project, here in Victoria in November for perhaps a week.

Please pray as the final arrangements are made for this, that it will be an edition that is helpful both in China and amongst Chinese speaking people all around the world, including here in Australia.

The Year Ahead in Victoria

We're just in the process of launching our annual project which is for a single country this year—that's Kenya.

There are children's, youth and adult projects and some literacy as well as translation. Kenya is a very determined country. The Bible Society there is very active and they are very keen to work with us on this variety of projects.

There will shortly be a pack available for groups and individuals in churches and in church groups and beyond, and many Bible Study groups may well want to use some of the material.

There is a short DVD available. You just need to ask for a copy (there is no charge).



Working Together More Smoothly

Each of the Bible Societies in Australia is engaged in an effort to try and find ways in which we can work as closely together as possible.

Our Wholesale Division, or Scriptures Division, is the only one in the Western world at present which makes a small surplus on its trading activities. However many of the pressures on it from large retailers such as Koorong and Word, make things more difficult as time goes on.

Give thanks that with the leadership of Jorge Rodrigues who is based in South Sydney that such an efficient and effective operation exists, and give thanks for the many hundreds of thousands of new edition of NIV Bibles that have been made available in Australia and Africa and other parts of Asia at desperately needed, cheaper prices.

Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for sticking with us in the New Year. May God bless you.

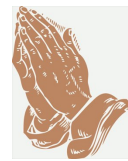
Sincerely,



Tony Crook

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Matthew 21:22



Victorian Diary—February 2010

DATE	VENUE	SPEAKER
Sunday, 7th	Rowville Anglican Church	Jan Peddersen
Sunday, 21st	Port Fairy Uniting Church	Jan Peddersen
Tuesday, 23rd	Gisborne Presbyterian Friendship Group	Tony Crook
Sunday, 28th	Tasmania Bible House opening, Launceston	Tony Crook

If you would prefer to receive this Prayer Letter electronically, please advise us of your email address by phoning The Bible Society (03) 9877 9277 or by email to infovic@bible.com.au. We are keen to convert to email where possible, which saves time, paper and postage.