

Wessex Auxiliary Report 2013

The year 2013 was a very different to 2012. The interest in our Jubilee edition of the Bible in 2012 had been exceptional and we always felt that a quieter year would follow. It was also a more difficult year for the Committee with the loss of close family as well as work and health pressures.

However, we began the year with a very encouraging meeting held at a prison near Henley. This prison houses mainly foreign nationals of African and Afro-Caribbean origin, and had taken a large number of Jubilee Bibles in 2012. The chaplain said that a number of prisoners had asked if we could come and do a talk on the origins of the Authorised Version. So in February, Pastor Roland Burrows (a member of the TBS General Committee) and one of the Wessex Committee members went along. Around 30 prisoners, along with guards and other staff, were gathered in a room. Pastor Burrows gave a very interesting talk and there were some well-informed questions from a number of prisoners, some of whom had been brought up with the Authorised Version. Each prisoner took away a TBS reference Bible to keep.

In the early part of the year our finances were constrained as we were running a deficit due to the 2012 demand for Jubilee Bibles, but the Lord bountifully answered our prayers and by May we had sufficient funds and were able to go forth again in the distribution work. Almost at the same time, we were asked to supply 30 Bibles for a local college. We continued to approach schools across the region, and there was an encouraging response in the Trowbridge area with three primary schools who had taken Jubilee Bibles requesting further quantities for children leaving to go into secondary education. However, many other schools and prisons turned us away.

In July we had a change on the Committee. Keith Grewcock from Emmanuel Church in Salisbury resigned due to increasing family, church and work pressures. We were very sad to see Keith go and thank him for all his hard work and gracious counsel during his time with us. We are pleased that Simon Tyler, also from Emmanuel Salisbury, has joined us. At around the same time, we expanded our work into the care home sector as we were experiencing many closed doors in schools and prisons. Almost straight away, two doors opened for us in Salisbury to distribute large print Bibles to the

elderly; and then shortly after this another prison accepted several copies of the Word of God. However, despite many letters, emails and phone calls by the Committee in their areas, the general uptake was very limited and our faith as a Committee was tried. However, we remember that in this work at Wessex **it is the Lord** who sovereignly opens the doors, makes a way for distribution, and most importantly blesses the Word to those who receive it. We are but labourers in His service. What a needful and timely reminder to me. It is the Lord's work, and He will have all the glory.

As we moved into the autumn, the doors began to open in a remarkable way, particularly in the prison sector. The chaplain of a prison near Bicester took our phone call and in response to an offer of Bibles said, 'Yes please: we can never have enough Bibles'. They were also asked if they had any need for foreign language Scriptures, and we were able to supply Scriptures in Lithuanian and Polish.

In October we made contact with an all-female prison in Gloucestershire. The chaplain was delighted to receive our phone call. This was a remarkable overruling of the Lord, as they mentioned that a group of prisoners on one wing had begun to meet for Bible study each day but didn't have suitable reference Bibles to do this with. When introduced them to the Westminster Bible, they said that this would be ideal, and were very pleased to receive 10 Westminster Bibles, one for each wing, and 325 pocket reference Bibles, one for each prisoner. This prison is very close to an all-male open prison, and they also took 10 Westminster Bibles, one for each wing.

During 2012, a prison in Bristol took 500 Jubilee Bibles. This year they took a further 50 Bibles and also Scriptures in Russian and Polish. We were also very encouraged when a prison on the Isle of Wight took a number of Bibles for the first time in several years.

We would make a further point on prisons. On several occasions it has been made clear to us that the chaplains have no budget for Bibles or calendars, and they really are very grateful when we are able to supply these copies of God's Word from the funds that the Lord has provided for the work. They are also extremely busy people, working often in very challenging circumstances, and are in much need of our prayers.

We are thankful to report that by the end of the year the Lord had enabled us to distribute 607 copies of His precious Word. He has been better to us than all our doubts and fears, and we would give Him all the honour and glory.

In the year ahead, if the Lord will, we hope to continue to distribute His Word amongst the needy souls in this region as He may help us. We also hope to commence placing poster texts on public transport in railway stations and on buses.

We would again encourage you to help us wherever you can in your local area. It was encouraging in 2012 to see how many people were able to help in the distribution of the Jubilee Bible. We would again seek your help during the year ahead, as the Lord may constrain. Perhaps you know the schools in your local area or your children attend a school or you are a teacher yourself? Perhaps there is a care home near you, and you know someone who works there or you may be connected to someone who is a resident?

We have proved in 2013 that there is an ongoing need in many of these institutions for the Word of God. May we see the Lord going before us once more in the year to come.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1.17)