

SOWER

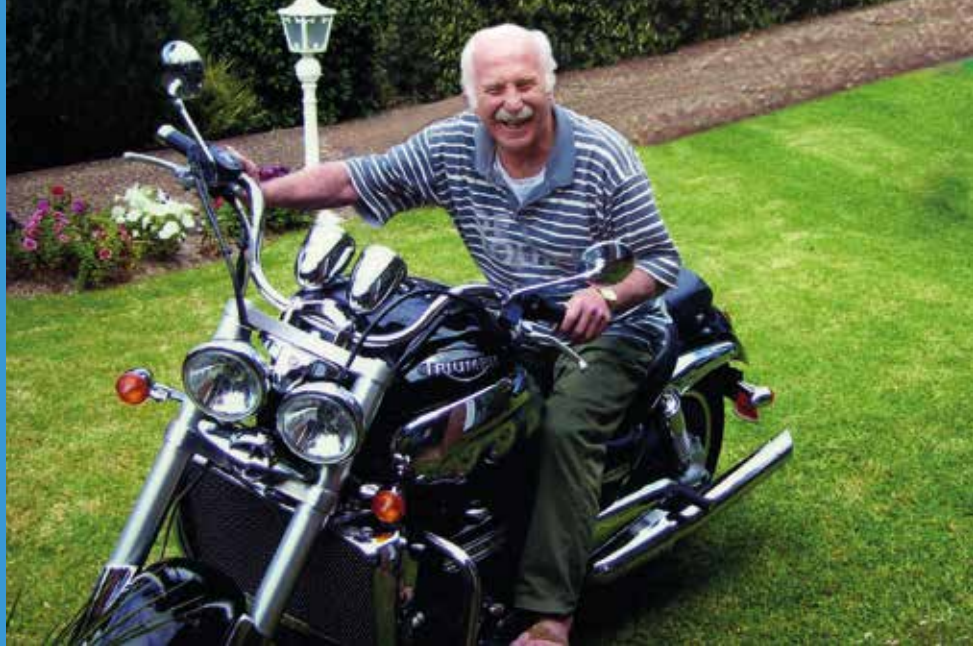
SPRING 2019

*Saving souls
in South
African jails*



**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

When there's a will there's a way



The late Warwick Connor enjoys riding his cousin Ray's motorbike

Warwick James Connor was only seven when his mother died, leaving him and his four-year-old brother Arthur as orphans.

“While our mother was alive, we went to a small church in Sydney. The focus of the church was overseas missions,” recalls Arthur of his brother, who died last year of melanoma at the age of 75.

“These circumstances greatly influenced both of us so that later in life we were drawn to supporting missions. As well as being concerned with the spread of the gospel, both of us were concerned for the disadvantaged, and for orphans.”

These seminal experiences

explain why Warwick, who never married, left generous bequests to Bible Society Australia and five other charities in his will.

Because Warwick died quickly after a short illness, he was not able to specify how he would like the beneficiaries to spend the gifts. So Arthur contacted each of the organisations to discuss options for directing the money.

When it came to Bible Society, Arthur said he and Warwick were often hard-pressed to choose which Sower appeal to support. After deliberation, Arthur decided to steer Warwick's gift of \$150,000 into our Remote and Indigenous Ministry projects to facilitate Indigenous language work.

“All the work is commendable. However, given the number of Australian Indigenous people who speak traditional languages, I'm sure he would be most 'chuffed' if funds were able to be put toward translating the Bible into an Australian Indigenous language,” Arthur said.

After committing his life to Christ as a young man, Warwick trained as a carpenter and overcame disadvantages to forge a successful career in the public service of NSW. He attributed his success in life to his decision to turn his will over to God. He lived a full and satisfying life and was a long-term member and practical helper at a Sydney church.

Dear friends,

Thirty-seven years ago, a Navy workplace chaplain opened the pages of the Bible to me to explain that I wasn't who I thought I was but I was who God said I was. I hadn't grown up in a Christian family (expect for a faithful Nana) and I didn't fully understand what a Christian was - I had little concept of what the Bible contained let alone what it might have to say to me personally. Discovering that changed my life that day, and it has continued to change it every day since.

I needed the Bible opened and explained to me - fortunately, in my case there was ready availability of the Bible in my own language, but of course for others that's not the case. Bible poverty is a real thing around our world - and people are prevented from full engagement with it because of their own poverty, illiteracy or indeed because it simply doesn't exist in their own language.

Here in Australia, unless you are Indigenous or marginalised in some way, the problem is much less likely to be about availability but is about understanding that the Bible is credible and relevant.

The work of Bible Society is about addressing all of these

very real problems. The need is very different depending on the country and the circumstances. Translation, low-cost Bible distribution and engagement activities based on need - such as literacy or learning to read, or perhaps trauma counselling using scriptural resources - are important predominantly in developing nations or those where there has been war or other significant trauma.

But here in Australia the need is very different. Church attendance continues to decline and the institution of church is seen in a less than positive light by many. So, the book on which the church's life is based is seen at best as irrelevant and at worst, as detrimental to wellbeing. The need here is to advocate for the Bible - to draw people towards it so that they can discover for themselves that it contains beauty, truth and goodness which are essential for living life in all its fullness in every circumstance, for full human flourishing.

That's quite a challenge - Bible literacy is very low among Australians and even the 10 per cent or thereabouts of us who are in church regularly



apparently only read our Bibles spasmodically. Few of us read it and engage with it daily, and we struggle to share our faith with others. And not all of us who do share our faith publicly or otherwise do so particularly wisely or well. In this regard,

the words of Philippians come to mind: "Let your gentleness be evident to all."

Clearly the church isn't the complete answer. Neither are individual Christians.

Bible and other Christian agencies certainly aren't. But we are called to this work, this important mission, together.

I want to play my part. In fact it constantly amazes me that I get to play my part and that God trusts me (and you) with this. And together, I do believe we can make a difference. To champion the Bible to share the love of Jesus, so that lives are changed, and our world is transformed. It was for me, and I pray that it will be for others.

Melissa

Melissa Lipsett
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
Bible Society Australia

Freedom behind bars



South Africa is a beautiful country, blessed with spectacular scenery, flora and fauna. It is also a country that is desperate for change. With more than a quarter of its 54 million citizens unemployed, crime rates are rocketing, leading to serious overcrowding in its 232 prisons. In one of South Africa's largest prisons, Johannesburg Medium B, prisoners who haven't got a bunk bed sleep on the floor in any space they can find.

All who live in South Africa are influenced in some way or another by crime. Many South Africans who are able to do so choose to leave the country because of security concerns.

Strauss Viljoen, a Church Community Relations Coordinator for Bible Society Australia, is one of those who decided to move to a safer country which offered better opportunities for his young family.

"When I speak to South Africans, I often hear that they still love South Africa but are thankful to live in Australia. Many of these expats have been affected by crime and violence, either directly or indirectly," he says.

"I'm lucky that I haven't been directly affected by crime. I have been indirectly affected and, if I'm honest, I do feel a measure of resentment and anger at those

perpetrators of violence who have forced me to leave the country of my birth. As a Christian, these feelings have always left me a bit conflicted."

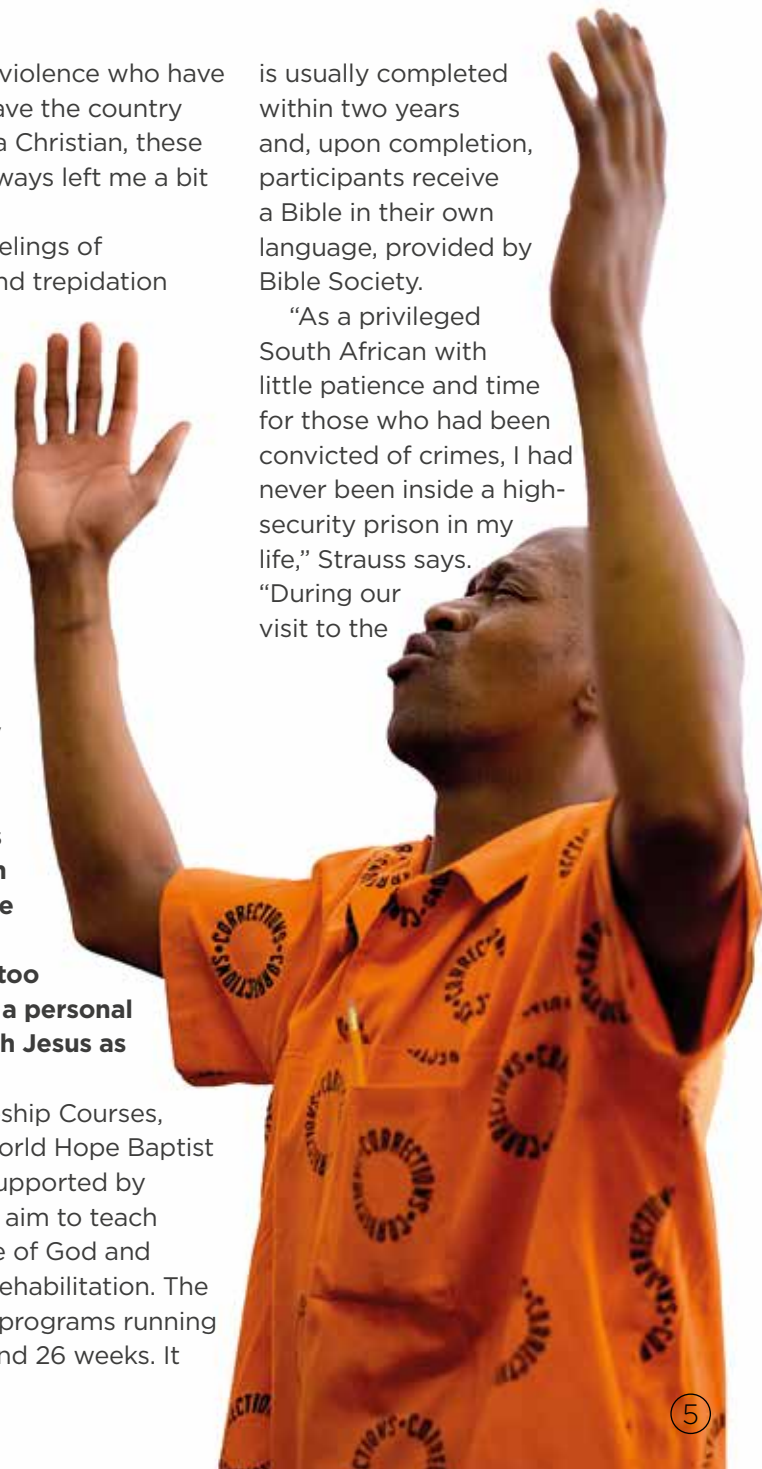
It was with feelings of apprehension and trepidation that Strauss went back to South Africa with Bible Society in October 2018 to support a prisons engagement and Bible distribution project.

Bible Society is working in more than 200 of the country's prisons to reach inmates with the knowledge and hope that they too can experience a personal relationship with Jesus as their Saviour.

Bible Discipleship Courses, organised by World Hope Baptist Ministries and supported by donors like you, aim to teach inmates the love of God and help with their rehabilitation. The course has two programs running over 16 weeks and 26 weeks. It

is usually completed within two years and, upon completion, participants receive a Bible in their own language, provided by Bible Society.

"As a privileged South African with little patience and time for those who had been convicted of crimes, I had never been inside a high-security prison in my life," Strauss says. "During our visit to the





Atteridgeville prison, the Good Lord decided to place us in a church service with 200 or more prisoners who had been convicted of serious crimes that carry sentences of 10 years or more.

“My pent-up resentment, cynicism and anger at the people I saw in front of me was out of place. The people in that room were there to praise God through their deep African baritone voices and to be served with the word.

“About 30 men received Bibles that day as they had completed their discipleship course. The joy of receiving a Bible could clearly

be seen on their faces.

“Many others were cheering them on and enjoying the moment with them. A similar number signed on for the next course, which would allow them to receive Bibles as well.”

Afterwards, Strauss was able to talk to some of the graduates, some of whom held very little hope of ever seeing the outside of prison again.

“There was joy there, though. The faces weren’t those of hardened criminals but those of people filled with hope.”

Charles Sadiki, one of the

pastors from World Hope Ministries, and himself a former inmate, told us that the gospel message finds fertile ground with these prisoners.

He mentioned that most of the prisoners are not proud of what they’ve done. They often feel guilt and regret. “The message that they were created in the ‘image of God,’ and that they have value as human beings, resonates with them and gives them hope.”

Strauss was reminded of 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The

old has gone, the new is here!

“On that morning I could smile with these prisoners and witness lives that had been changed through the word. **I felt as if I was the one who received the message that morning and not them.** I realise now more than ever that God’s grace can’t be limited and is for all.”

As Strauss left the prison he thought of the well-known words that Nelson Mandela spoke upon leaving prison: *“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.”*

Strauss realised that he needed to take these words to heart as well as the prisoners.

According to Pastor Willie Dengler, who oversees the prison ministry work, lives are changed through this program, as prisoners receive the opportunity to understand the forgiveness and mercy of Christ. **For many, hope has been restored in God, in humans, and in themselves.** Many also begin to seek restoration with their families and ask forgiveness from those they have affected by their actions. Further, the program offers greater hope for the future of these prisoners, as they are encouraged to continue making

disciples and persevering in the call of God.

Bible Society is also working to help the estimated one in seven South Africans who live in poverty to escape the poverty trap through education.

The *If you can read, you can learn* project teaches basic literacy skills to pre-school to Grade 2 children in disadvantaged areas, setting them up for a better school performance.

“I have always been a great advocate for our literacy project as I believe Bible based literacy for preschoolers is essential to lowering high school drop-out rates which often lead to a life of crime,” comments Strauss.

As well as helping children greatly with their education through the school system, the project also helps children know and understand the Bible at a very early age.

\$44 helps bring hope to South African inmates.

\$88 places another eight Bibles in a South African prison.

\$120 provides 40 Bible-based literacy books for pre-schoolers.



Pastor Willie Dengler prays with an inmate.

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Please call **1300 BIBLES** (1300 242 537), use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowhope**



Pedal power

While most people in Australia spent February this year sweltering through a heatwave, Tasmania's Graeme Perry was braving a very different climate. As coordinator of Tasmania's Bike for Bibles (BfB), Graeme led by example when he and 13 other riders combined the power of prayer with pedal power to raise money for Bible Society's sponsored women's literacy program in Bangladesh.

"This year was the toughest ride I have been on," Graeme said.

"Not just because of the terrain; the weather was terrible, even by Tasmanian standards. It rained seven days out of ten and was freezing cold. Hypothermia was a greater problem than sunburn."

Since the first BfB ride from Sydney to Melbourne more than 30 years ago, thousands of participants have supported the initiative, which funds various projects throughout the world. This year alone, money raised by BfB will help Syrian refugees, Indigenous translation work in Australia and literacy programs in

South Africa.

Graeme's passion for BfB began 31 years ago with a ride from Burnie, on the north-west coast of Tasmania, to Hobart – 350 kilometres over two days.

"After surviving that ride, I was hooked," Graeme said.

"I have always been passionate about cycling and reading, so when the chance to combine the two came along, I grabbed it with both hands. Since that first ride, I have been involved in a minimum of one ride per year, either as a rider or roadie."

Riding more than 1300 km in freezing weather and difficult terrain was not the only challenge Graeme faced this year. As coordinator of the event, he not only planned the course riders would take, he also organised accommodation and coordinated the “roadie” support crew.

“We started in Smithton and went to Launceston, down the east coast to Hobart then back up the west coast to Cradle Mountain and finished in Launceston.

“A huge amount of preparation goes into a ride this long – ten days’ riding with three rest days. First a course must be planned,

then accommodation sorted; this year it was campsites, billets and backpackers. Meal stops are planned around suitable places to stop and availability of churches to feed us, as this keeps our on-road costs down.

“Our hard-working roadies are in charge of feeding us. They organise the menu and buy and cook the food. They also follow behind to protect us and look after riders with mechanical or physical breakdowns. Rides cannot go ahead without roadies.”

Graeme initially hoped 20 riders would raise \$2000 each for the Bangladesh women’s literacy program. **The team of 14 riders managed to raise more than \$50,000, an effort Graeme attributes to the “incredible generosity” of supporters.**

And it was the supporters and the women of Bangladesh who provided the greatest inspiration when things got tough on the road. **“Knowing that in 18 months these ladies will be learning to read the Bible was our motivation,” Graeme said.**

“The greatest thing about Bike for Bibles is the people I meet, and this year was no exception.”



You are invited

to join the celebration of a major milestone in the development of the Auslan Bible.

On **September 23** – the *International Day of Sign Languages* – we will mark the culmination of a 22-year project to translate the Bible into the first language of 70 per cent of Australia’s 50,000 Deaf people.

The Auslan Bible will be available in an online format.

The event will be held:
2pm on 23 September,
Rydges Hotel Sydney
28 Albion Street, Surry Hills NSW

Please RSVP for catering purposes to **0417 467 076** or events@biblesociety.org.au

Reaching Persians overseas



Flickr / Gulliemolus21

Iran is the only nation on earth that allows Christian worship in any language except its national language (Farsi) and allows Bibles in any language except Farsi.

However, Iran also hosts the fastest-growing house church movement in the world. The translation of Today's Persian Version (TPV), launched in 2007, has been well received among Iranians, with print and electronic copies distributed to more than 500,000 people.

After the Iranian revolution of 1979, life for Christians in Iran became harder, with many more restrictions on Christian communities. This prompted the migration of Iranians all over the world, creating a significant Persian diaspora.

Even though the country's Bible Society building was confiscated, its work continues. **The United Bible Societies established the Iranian Bible Society in Diaspora (IBSD) in 2015 as a worldwide structure to serve the Iranian communities in the diaspora** and, as opportunities arise, inside Iran.

Its Executive Director is Nahid Sepehri, the daughter of Rev. Sadegh Sepehri, who was the last Executive Director of the Bible Society in Iran.

Rev. Sepehri was the first person to print the entire Farsi Bible inside Iran. Sadly, he was forced into exile in 1989, just before the government closed down the Bible Society building in Tehran. Nahid was then working in the translation department.

"In February 1990, we were

working and we heard someone ringing the doorbell. One of the men went to open the door and we realised some Muslims are coming in our office. Soon we put our robes on and they came with the gun, saying 'You are spies,' so they confiscated everything and they pushed us to sign - 'We are not coming in this office any more, we are not working for Bible Society.' After that, everything was gone," says Nahid.

After her marriage to fellow Christian Mansour Khajehpour, the government harassed them and imposed restrictions on their movements.

"Every day we had to go to the office, sign there and they put a death penalty for my husband," she recalls.

Eventually, afraid for the safety

of their baby daughter, Rebeka, they decided to try to leave the country. Mansour took his opportunity to escape to Athens while he was on a bond out of prison. Then he tried to figure out how to get his wife and daughter out of the country. “I was bargaining with smugglers how to get Nahid out to Turkey and how to walk through the river into Greece,” he says.

God miraculously intervened to bring them out, with the help of Nahid’s father, who was based in Germany. He told Nahid to get a new passport without any stamps and send it with her brother to Germany. Amazingly, the Greek embassy in Germany granted visas to Nahid and her daughter without a quibble.

“They looked at this blank passport, it didn’t have any stamp that she had entered Germany, and they granted Nahid a visa to Greece without Nahid being at the interview ... if this is not God’s providence, what is?” says Mansour. “She and Rebeka flew on an aeroplane, they got a delicious breakfast, and three hours later they were in Greece. This is amazing.”

After about a year, the family entered the US as refugees. That was in June 1997, and a year later, they moved to Seattle, where

they are still based, with Nahid as Executive Director of IBSD and Mansour as a mission pastor.

During its first three years of operation, IBSD distributed more than one million pieces of Scripture in Farsi. Three Iranian Christian satellite TV networks have also promoted its work among Iranians.

Will you help Nahid strengthen IBSD’s foundations to expand its work of sharing God’s word among persecuted followers in this restricted nation? The IBSD Board recently started making new business plans for a deeper impact and sustainable ministry.



Mansour Khajepour, left, and Nahid Sepehri

In 2019, IBSD aims to put Scriptures into the hands of 1.5 million new and existing believers: 10,000 Standard Bibles, 10,000 Revised TPV New Testaments, 5000 Revised New Testaments with Psalms and Proverbs, 10,000 children’s game boards and 10,000 revised Gospels of John.

Shaghayegh, a 25-year-old woman from Iran, is so grateful for this work: “I have been a Christian for seven years; however, I am very thankful that now I can touch a real Bible and hold my own copy of the Bible. Thank you for sending the Bible to me!”

Will you encourage more Iranian believers around the world by helping to put Bibles into their hands?

GIVE NOW

Please call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)**, use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowreach**

Devotion

Second chances

God is often known as the God of the “Second Chance.” In John 6:37 Jesus says, “whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (NIV) There is no limit to the promise of God. The question is, what kind of people does God choose to come to himself? Sinners! Hosea 14:4 “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”

You and I often mess up, but God is still merciful and we see the second chance as an opportunity to be restored to the life and purpose God planned for us. God restores

us not because of who we are or what we have done but because of who he is; he is the God of grace, mercy and loving justice.

Over the past 20 years, World Hope Ministries has been involved in prison outreach in South Africa, discipling inmates and seeing the power of the gospel transform men and women.

God is not limited in his saving grace or the power of the word and work of God. A young gangster, aged 17, was sentenced to 61 years for double murder; he surrendered to Christ in prison. A few weeks later, he planned to escape out of prison. The night before, he found himself faced with a decision, “I am a Christian.” Instead of walking out, he chose his sentence and found true freedom in his heart. He now serves the Lord in prison, leading a

dynamic church behind bars.

A young juvenile awaiting trial on charges of assault and rape responded to the message of Christ. After I prayed with him, he expressed his fear that he now had to tell the truth about what he had done. Two weeks later, he ran to me joyfully exclaiming the truth had set him free! He’s still in prison, but the truth has given him peace with God.

The gospel made no sense to young Edward Makua imprisoned for 25 years, a gang leader in prison. Empowered by witchcraft and controlled by demon spirits, he kept rejecting the “white man’s” gospel – until one morning, the realisation hit him that Christ died for him. No one had ever done anything for him. He had an encounter with the Lord, and experienced deliverance from the bondages of demonic control. Today, he is living for Jesus.

After 13 years in prison, he has been released and works full-time with World Hope as a facilitator in prisons and churches. God knows our destiny; if we come to him, he will accept us no matter what.

Pastor Willie Dengler, pictured left, leads World Hope Ministries in Johannesburg, South Africa.





A road trip to remember

From left: Greg Clarke, Inawinytji Williamson, Jennifer Ingkatja, Owen Burton and Paul Eckert

Bible Society's former CEO Greg Clarke caught up with Pitjantjatjara translators Inawinytji Williamson, Jennifer Ingkatja and Owen Burton while paying a goodbye visit to Adelaide in June.

Also present at the farewell meeting were Louise Sherman, Bible Society's Remote & Indigenous Ministry Support (RIMS) Production Coordinator, and the recently retired RIMS project coordinator, Paul Eckert, who spent almost 40 years overseeing the Pitjantjatjara Bible Project, translating the Bible into

an Aboriginal language of Central Australia.

At every stage of Greg's road trip, beginning in Perth, travelling to Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney before finishing in Ulverstone, Tasmania, staff, volunteers and long-term supporters gathered to say thanks for a great nine years of visionary leadership. He was particularly touched when one donor handed him an envelope containing \$1700 in cash for Bibles for China. "Another man said he started supporting Bible Society in 1952 and still was!"

Greg encouraged them by

sharing his experiences, insights and thanks. He told staff and supporters that he felt like his role at BSA was one he had "prepared for my whole life."

Greg became CEO of Bible Society Australia in 2010, the first CEO of the newly amalgamated national organisation, which was previously a state-based structure. He said it felt like "the right time to leave," following the organisation's celebration of 200 years and an intense period of planning "for the next 200 as we look to the next era of our mission."

Bible brings language back fr

When a language is lost or endangered, so too is the culture, leading to a deep sense of loss and personal and community grief.

The Nyoongar Aboriginal peoples, consisting of several clans in the south-western tip of Western Australia, are trying to revive the language of their heart and memory. **Very few Nyoongar can speak their language fluently, as the older generation was forbidden to speak it when they were growing up** while attending mission and government schools. These elders of the community were unable to teach it to their children as they had forgotten it.

A small group of these Nyoongar aunties gathered for a language class at a small Bunbury Church in Western Australia in June. Unanimous in their love of God and the belief that their language and culture – endangered by white rule – were ordained by God, they have gone back to school. The Pentecost



story speaks strongly to them: in Acts 2:6 Luke writes, “a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.”

Despite the immense sadness they feel at the near destruction of their language, they know that God has always been with their people, and Pentecost reminds Christians that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift to all and God hears all, no matter what tongue they speak.

For non-Indigenous types, who perhaps know just one language, it is hard to fully understand the impact of losing the language of your people. Unfortunately, that is the story of the Nyoongar people.

Aunty Gloria Dann, a woman who has seen and suffered much in her life, does not mince words when she reflects on the importance of language.

“When you know your language and your culture, you know who you are,” she says.

Aunty Gloria was one of the translators



**From left: Aunty Melb
Communications Dire**



**Charmaine
Counsellor**

From near extinction



Ma Wallam, Uncle Tom Little, Charmaine Counsellor, Penny Mulvey (Bible Society Director), Rick Pekan (Bible Society, WA Church Relations), Aunty Margaret Little

who spent 15 years working on the Gospel of Luke, now available both as an audio and printed book, for Nyoongar and non-Nyoongar people to read. It is unique in its presentation. It has the Nyoongar words on the left page, English (translated from Nyoongar) on

the right, and a glossary of words at the bottom. This assists new

readers to the language.

Charmaine Counsellor uses early childhood teaching skills to teach people their lost Nyoongar language. “There has to be a grieving process before you can actually begin to learn ‘language,’” Charmaine explains. “To be able to say I was one of those kids who wasn’t allowed to speak in language, or I remember being punished for speaking that word – this process might take a day and a lot of tears, a lot of emotion ... like Pandora’s box.”

She believes her understanding of God is deepened through the lens of her own heart language.

Bible Society continues to support this extraordinary and painstaking translation work. Nyoongar translator Tom Little spent a week in Canberra in July with Bible Society’s leading expert in Aboriginal languages, Rev. Dr John Harris, working on the Old Testament book of Ruth.

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Please call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)**, use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowaus**



Ready to share good news

A literacy student from the Karen ethnic group in Myanmar, Law Eh Paw Wah, says he used to feel very shy because he could not speak and read the Karen language well.

“Sometimes when I saw that nowadays children have opportunity to learn Karen language, I am really envious and happy. God knows my feeling and he open the door for me to learn Karen language through Bible Society of Myanmar and Karen Baptist Convention,” writes Law, who is from Kyauk Gyi, Nyaung Lay Bin Village, Bago Division.

“Because of this class, I can read and write our mother language. Now I can know the meaning and pronunciation exactly and deeply. Whatever I learn from this class I will share to our next generation. I deeply thank God for giving me this opportunity.”

Law is grateful for the Bible Society of Myanmar’s commitment to making the Bible available to every language group in Myanmar. This is a huge challenge as there are 200 languages in Myanmar spoken by 153 different races.

Although literacy rates have improved in Myanmar in recent years, they are lower than the national average for ethnic minority groups in their mother languages.

The population of Myanmar is about 54 million, of whom 88 per cent are Buddhist. Christians constitute 6.2 per cent of the population.

Karen people are the largest Christian group and the biggest population among the ethnic minorities. Surprisingly, there are many illiterate Karen communities, particularly in remote areas. Asho

Chin communities also experience very low rates of literacy and have a sizeable Christian population (about 40 per cent).

This is why the Bible Society of Myanmar is focusing its *Literacy Through Listening* audio program among the Sgaw Karen ethnic group and the Acho Chin ethnic group, along with speakers of Bamar, Myanmar's national language, which is spoken by the majority of people.

The project uses audio material played on MP3 players with Scripture portions for new readers, New Testaments and comics. Workshops, training sessions and village visits are taking place.

This year, the project encompasses 200 classes with 4000 students in 100 villages among Sgaw Karen; 30 classes with 600 students in 50 villages among Myanmar (Bamar-speaking) communities and 30 classes with 600 students in 30 villages among Asho Chin-speaking communities.

One of the newly trained facilitators, Saw Zion Bo, says she really appreciates the opportunity to lead her village's first literacy class. "We know more Karen pronunciation and usage exactly. As I am a leader who have to lead the class, I know more words.

"Some words are almost disappear soon. **Listening with MP3 teaching aid is very effective and the students are very interested with this new method.** To lead the class, this teaching aid is very effective and no need to speak too much."

A literacy project organiser from Bible Society of Myanmar comments that all the students and leaders seem happy and enthusiastic.

"Nowadays most of the next generation do not speak their language and maybe in the next 10 years some languages will almost disappear. When I visited the classes, I saw many young people came and studied so I am so happy because it is very good for our future to maintain the literature and culture."

The MP3 players used in the classes not only contain a wealth of teaching but they are also a kind of mobile missionary. They not only teach literacy using Scripture based materials but help remote ethnic minorities learn vital life skills. Best of all, listeners can hear the Bible spoken in their heart language.

Will you help these people in Myanmar to access printed and digital Scriptures by themselves to gain knowledge of God's truth?



GIVE NOW

Please call **1300 BIBLES (1300 242 537)**, use the donation form on the back page or visit **biblesociety.org.au/sowmyanmar**



Our goals and God's plans



Chan Long is seated second from left

As Acting CEO, it is my job to see the goals we've set are being reached. It involves travelling to see the results of the projects supported by you, our donors.

I can tell you honestly that the engagement programs you fund are working.

Women are learning to read and write using the Bible in China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Pakistan. Children are growing in literacy from the word of God, in Lebanon and South Africa.

I also know that trauma healing programs, all based on the Bible, are reaching women and transforming their lives in places such as Cameroon and Slovenia.

I know that the Bible advocacy programs we promised are under way too - here in Australia of course, with the great work of the Centre for Public Christianity.

Importantly, I can personally testify that our Bible production and distribution goals are being met. I have seen the mighty printing presses in Nanjing - where we are part of the Amity Press joint venture. Bibles go out in their hundreds of thousands. In Chinese, yes, but also in minority group languages, for millions of Bible-hungry believers across Asia.

I met one of these young new

believers in Cambodia recently. It is here I need to make an admission! When the word of God goes into someone's life, I have certain expectations of what will happen in that person's life. I suppose we all do. What actually happens is always a surprise.

The young woman's name is Chan Long. She has recently become a Christian and she's thrilled to be using her Bible to learn how to read and write in Khmer. When I asked her what the message of the Bible had brought her, I guess I thought she'd say something about discovering she is loved by God. Or perhaps how great it is to read. But that just reveals something about me as a Western woman.

No, what Chan Long loves about the Bible are three completely different things. First, that she no longer fears the spirit world; she said, "Spirits push us down but God lifts us up." Second, that she feels she wants to

share what she has with her neighbours. Third, Chan Long told me that, before, her husband drank a lot and rarely spoke, but now she has "peace in my family."

Who could plan for these outcomes? **People like Chan Long are the reason I'm personally supporting Bible For Life, our regular giving program.** It really does change lives. It also proves something about God's word. It always brings good, but the good it does can never, ever be predicted.

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11



With every blessing,

Melissa

Melissa Lipsett
Chief Executive Officer
(Acting)
Join *Bible For Life* at
[biblesociety.org.au/
bibleforlife](https://biblesociety.org.au/bibleforlife)



The Yolngu people of Arnhem Land celebrate the dedication of the Gospel of Mark in Dhuwaya language

Top End receives new books of the Bible in heart language

A flurry of Bible translation activity is happening in the Top End, with the Indigenous Yolngu people of Arnhem Land celebrating the dedication of the Gospel of Mark in the Dhuwaya language at Yirrkala in early June and eagerly anticipating the publication of Mark in Djapu. This is the first time any book of the Bible has been completed



in the Dhuwaya language. Mrs Wunungmurra, the key Indigenous Bible translator on the Dhuwaya project, sadly passed away last year, just three chapters short of finishing the Gospel of Mark she had painstakingly translated almost entirely on her own. Since then, two other women from her clan have stepped up to finish the work. They now have further plans to begin translating other books of the Bible into their language.

Mrs Wunungmurra had said the

Dhuwaya language was one that all people in her area could read and understand. Local schools have teaching resources in Dhuwaya, official recognition that children in areas such as Yirrkala are speaking and thinking in the Dhuwaya language and that a lack of learning resources in their “heart” language was putting them at a severe disadvantage.

The same can be said of the lack of Bible resources in Dhuwaya and other Yolngu languages, say other

local Yolngu Bible translators.

“For our new generation who are growing up ... and for everybody in the community too ... we’re doing this Bible translating so they can read in our own language, so they will understand more about God,” said Nancy

Ngalmadimadj, a Maung translator in a recent video from the gathering at Yirrkala. Nancy is from Warruw, Goulburn Island in Western Arnhem Land. In 2008, the Djambarrpuyngu New Testament was published to great fanfare in the Top End. Since then, translators who worked on the Djambarrpuyngu NT have expanded their efforts and recruited other local translators, with a vision to help other clans and the knowledge that their language need not be the only East Arnhem language with the Bible.

Yurranydjil Dhurrkhay is a leading Indigenous Bible translator among the Yolngu people, working

primarily on the Djambarrpuyngu and Wangurri Bible projects. She stepped up to help the Dhuwaya project in the final stages before it was published, and attended the dedication in Yirrkala.

“It was very moving to see the family of the main Dhuwaya

the Bible in their own language for the first time.”

Translation teams from seven language groups among the Yolngu people gathered in the small Indigenous community of Yirrkala on the eastern coast of Arnhem Land for two weeks

in June to **learn how to use new translation software called “Adapt It.”** Using the dominant Yolngu language, Djambarrpuyngu and its completed New Testament as their source text,

Yurranydjil says she hopes the software will quicken their efforts to have the Bible

translated into other Yolngu languages.

“How much we have done. But how much have we left to do!” she said. She said there were plans to begin work on the Djambarrpuyngu Old Testament, beginning with Genesis.



(Above) Translators from seven language groups learn new translation software at a workshop (Right) Bible translator Yurranydjil Dhurrkhay



translator all present at the dedication. They were very emotional,” Yurranydjil said.

“But it is wonderful to see others from [Mrs Wunungmurra’s] clan step up to finish the very big job she undertook, and amazing to watch as they received a part of

Prayer points

September-December

September 15-21

Australia - Mission: Please pray for the group embarking from Australia on September 21 on the Great Wall of China trek. Pray that they will have a wonderful time trekking the Great Wall, as they raise funds to help provide Bibles to Christians in China.

Australia - Events: Please pray for talks by John Swinton, the leading expert about dementia and faith, in partnership with HammondCare on September 21 in Sydney's CBD, October 14 in Turrumurra and October 19 in Campbelltown.

September 22-28

Australia: Praise God for the launch of the Auslan Bible website on September 23 and for the committee who have faithfully translated and interpreted parts of the Bible into the language of Australia's deaf community. Pray this resource may draw many to Christ.

Australia - Mission: Please pray for those hiking 72km of the Bibbulmun Track in WA between September 26 and October 1. Pray for safety and good logistics as they complete the challenging trek, and that they would be blessed by the experience.

September 29-October 5

Lebanon: Please pray for the Literacy Skills for Refugees project which seeks to provide refugee children with a safe and loving environment where they can take literacy courses based on Bible stories to help them get back to the formal education system.

Australia - Publishing: Pray for the publishing team staff as they seek to contact new authors to build up Bible Society's publishing arm.

October 6-12

Australia - Publishing: Give thanks for the launch of *Metanoia* by Christian actor Anna McGahan and pray that many lives will be touched by Anna's testimony.

Pakistan: Please continue to pray as Christian women acquire the ability to read and write through the Beacon of Light Bible-based program. Thank God for the 240 classes running mostly in remote areas, villages and among the brick kiln workers. Thank God for the 12 partner churches and organisations.

October 12-19

Australia - Mission: Please pray for the riders and roadies in the Bike for Bibles Southern Slopes Ride from October 12-19 which is raising funds to support Bible Society's literacy project in South Africa.

India: Praise God for the publication of the Nagamese New Testament - the first significant publication in this language. Nagamese is used by about a million people in north-east India and some regions of Myanmar.

October 20-26

Australia - Mission: Please pray for Walk for Bibles on October 26 as a group of walkers hike the Great Southern Rail Trail Leongatha, Victoria.

South Africa: Please pray for the *If you can read, you can learn* project, teaching basic literacy skills to pre-school to Grade 2 children in disadvantaged areas.

October 27-November 2

Australia: Please pray for our academics as they prepare to bring an illuminating and refreshing approach to the Scriptures at Bible Society's Professional Development day centred on Biblical theology for teachers on October 31.

China: Please pray for the literacy classes being run to help rural Christians read the Bible so that they can come to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.

November 3-9

Australia - Indigenous: Please pray that translation of the Book of Ruth into the Nyoongar language of Western Australia will bring healing to a language group which was forbidden to speak their language.

Fiji: Pray for the first Pacific Bible Forum being held in Fiji in November. People from organisations around the South Pacific who work in Bible mission are coming together to discuss and plan how to eradicate Bible poverty in the Pacific.

November 10-16

Australia - Bibles in schools: Pray that Scripture teachers will use the Bible well in their lessons and that the children will be touched by the truth and beauty of the gospel and meet Jesus for themselves.

Nicaragua: Please pray that the children suffering from cancer in Nicaragua would know God's love through his word through the *Hope and smiles for children with cancer* project. Please pray that their parents put their trust in God. Also pray for each volunteer at the La Mascota hospital.

November 17-23

Australia - The Centre for Public Christianity: Please pray that CPX's podcast, *Life & Faith*, will reach a wide audience that will discover the surprising ways the Christian faith illuminates the world we live in.

Syria: Please pray for trauma healing seminars that are equipping local churches to run Trauma Healing Centres. Pray that these churches would be able to reach out to their communities. Please pray for the trainers, trainees, and participating families.

November 24-30

Cambodia: Please pray for the *Children of the word* project, distributing Scripture in schools. Pray that many schools would open their doors to the materials.

Pray for the students, that their hearts would be open to the word and that their lives would be transformed.

Mozambique: Thank God for the completion and launch of the Bible translations into Txitxopi and Elomwe. Thank God for the new Scripture warehouses in the cities of Maputo-Benfica and in Chimoio.

December 1-7

Cameroon: Please pray for the two people groups who attend Bible based literacy classes, that being able to read the Bible will not only deepen their faith but they will gain valuable knowledge about respect for others and the harmful effects of violence.

Myanmar: Please pray that the *Literacy Through Listening* program will be well established in the rural villages and accepted by the people. Pray also that this project will play a vital role in sharing the gospel.

December 8-14

Germany: Please pray for progress in the Basic Bible Old Testament, the world's first Bible translation for new media. It is due for launch in January 2021.

South Africa: Pray for the leaders from World Hope Ministries as they facilitate the Discipleship Course in the prisons, that they will show wisdom as they lead inmates to the Lord. Pray that lives will be changed through the word of God.

December 15-21

South Africa: Please pray for Bible Society as they partner with George Whitefield College in supplying Bibles in select African languages to theology students so they can deliver much needed services to pastors and church leaders in Africa.

Angola: Pray that Bible Society will be able to buy a warehouse to store the Scriptures, and for some well-located land for future facilities. Ask God to guide them in achieving the goals set in the five-year plan.



Bible Reading Guide



The Blessed Life

By John Dickson

*Undeceptions Ministry
Founder & Speaker*

Week One

SEP 23 – SEP 29

- MON 23** Matt 4:23-25
- TUE 24** Matt 5:1-2
- WED 25** Prov 8:27-32
- THUR 26** Matt 5:3
- FRI 27** Matt 5:4
- SAT 28** Matt 5:5
- SUN 29** Matt 5:6

Week Two

SEP 30 – OCT 6

- MON 30** Matt 5:7
- TUE 1** Matt 5:8
- WED 2** Matt 5:9
- THUR 3** Matt 5:10
- FRI 4** Matt 5:11-12
- SAT 5** Matt 5:13
- SUN 6** Matt 5:14-16

Author and speaker John Dickson guides us through the opening lines of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, including the so-called "Beatitudes" or "blessings" which describe the joys of living for God's kingdom, here and now.



God of All Comfort

By Sarah Kinstead

Chaplain & Educator

Week Three

OCT 7 – OCT 13

- MON 7** 2 Cor 1:3-5
- TUE 8** 2 Cor 1:8b-9
- WED 9** Ps 139:7-9
- THUR 10** Ps 139:13-16, 90:12
- FRI 11** Ps 46:1-2
- SAT 12** Ps 34:17-18
- SUN 13** Ps 121:1-2

Week Four

OCT 14 – OCT 20

- MON 14** Ps 23:3-4
- TUE 15** Ps 56:8-9
- WED 16** Rom 8:28-31
- THUR 17** Matt 11:28-30
- FRI 18** Job 1:20-21
- SAT 19** Job 38:4-6
- SUN 20** Rev 21:3-4

Sometimes we find ourselves in circumstances in which we would rather not be. We may find them to be unfathomable at the time or unimaginable that this would be happening to us. This is often the case when facing all manner of losses. Yet the Bible describes its author as the God of all comfort. This collection of Bible studies presents the God of all comfort to those facing all kinds of losses.



The Body Born Again

By Anna McGahan

Actor, Poet & Author

Week Five

OCT 21 – OCT 27

- MON 21** Gen 1:27
- TUE 22** Ps 139:13-16
- WED 23** Matt 21:12-13
- THUR 24** 1 Cor 6:19-20
- FRI 25** Rom 6:12-14
- SAT 26** Matt 6:31-33
- SUN 27** Rom 12:1

Week Six

OCT 28 – NOV 3

- MON 28** Eccl 3:10-13
- TUE 29** Matt 6:22-23
- WED 30** Jas 3:2-5
- THUR 31** 2 Cor 5:6-10
- FRI 1** 2 Cor 4:7-10
- SAT 2** Isa 53:4-5
- SUN 3** Phil 1:19-21

Through this 14-day study, we will hear God's heart and intention for our physical bodies, and develop a posture of worship as we form a deeper relationship with the *Imago Dei*. We will explore how beautifully we can glorify God in our bodies, whether in pain or pleasure, strength or weakness, death or life.



First Verses

By Chris Mulherin

Executive Director ISCAST



Roots, Shoots & Fruits

By Bronwen Speedie

Writer & School Chaplain



Walking as I Am

By Bernard Gabbutt

Anglican Minister

Week Seven

NOV 4 - NOV 10

MON 4 Gen 1:1

TUE 5 Lev 1:1

WED 6 Ezra 1:1

THUR 7 Ps 19:1-2

FRI 8 Ps 22:1-2

SAT 9 Ps 23:1-3

SUN 10 Ps 51:1-2

Week Nine

NOV 18 - NOV 24

MON 18 Isa 5:24

TUE 19 Isa 11:1-3

WED 20 Dan 4:26-27

THUR 21 Num 24:5-7a

FRI 22 Hos 14:5-7

SAT 23 Hos 10:12-13a

SUN 24 Ps 92:12-15

Week Eleven

DEC 2 - DEC 8

MON 2 Eph 1:1-2

TUE 3 Eph 1:3-14

WED 4 Eph 1:15-23

THUR 5 Eph 2:1-10

FRI 6 Eph 2:11-22

SAT 7 Eph 3:1-13

SUN 8 Eph 3:14-21

Week Eight

NOV 11 - NOV 17

MON 11 Eccl 1:1-4

TUE 12 Luke 1:1-4

WED 13 John 1:1-5

THUR 14 Phlm 1:1-3

FRI 15 Heb 1:1-3

SAT 16 Jas 1:1-3

SUN 17 Rev 1:1-3

Week Ten

NOV 25 - DEC 1

MON 25 Isa 35:1-2

TUE 26 Isa 35:6-7

WED 27 Ps 104:16

THUR 28 Gal 5:22-23

FRI 29 Isa 27:6

SAT 30 Rev 22:1-3

SUN 1 Jer 17:7-8

Week Twelve

DEC 9 - DEC 15

MON 9 Eph 4:1-16

TUE 10 Eph 4:17-32

WED 11 Eph 5:1-5

THUR 12 Eph 5:6-14

FRI 13 Eph 5:15-21

SAT 14 Eph 5:22-6:9

SUN 15 Eph 6:10-24

Listen to the way the biblical authors start these 14 books, psalms and letters. What matters to them most? Where do they want to begin with their readers and hearers? From Genesis to Revelation, allow these verses, which were penned over many centuries, to lead you into the big picture of God's work.

What does a life that is flourishing in the Lord look like? A garden flourishes when the roots of the plants are nourished with rich, fertile soil and sufficient water. In this series, we will explore some Scripture passages that remind us of the practices, convictions and connections which help our faith and lives to flourish, whatever our circumstances.

In rural Australia – in fact, right across Australia – we are very keen on “identity” – who we are, what drives us, where we are going, where we fit in life. God is pretty keen on identity too – and Paul writes Ephesians with that in mind. As we move through Ephesians, God lovingly draws us back to know the confidence of who we are as his people, in this world, moved by his purposes.

We know you love reading the Bible. If you would like to engage in our full Bible devotional series, why not sign up to receive our Daily Bible emails? Each morning in your inbox you will receive commentary on each day's reading along with a question to ponder and a prayer point.

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**“Deeply affecting,
devastatingly raw, immensely
authentic ... I cannot recall
the last time I was so moved
by a personal before-and-
after narrative of radical
transformation.”**

- Melinda Tankard Reist -

***Metanoia* is an
incarnational work of art.”**

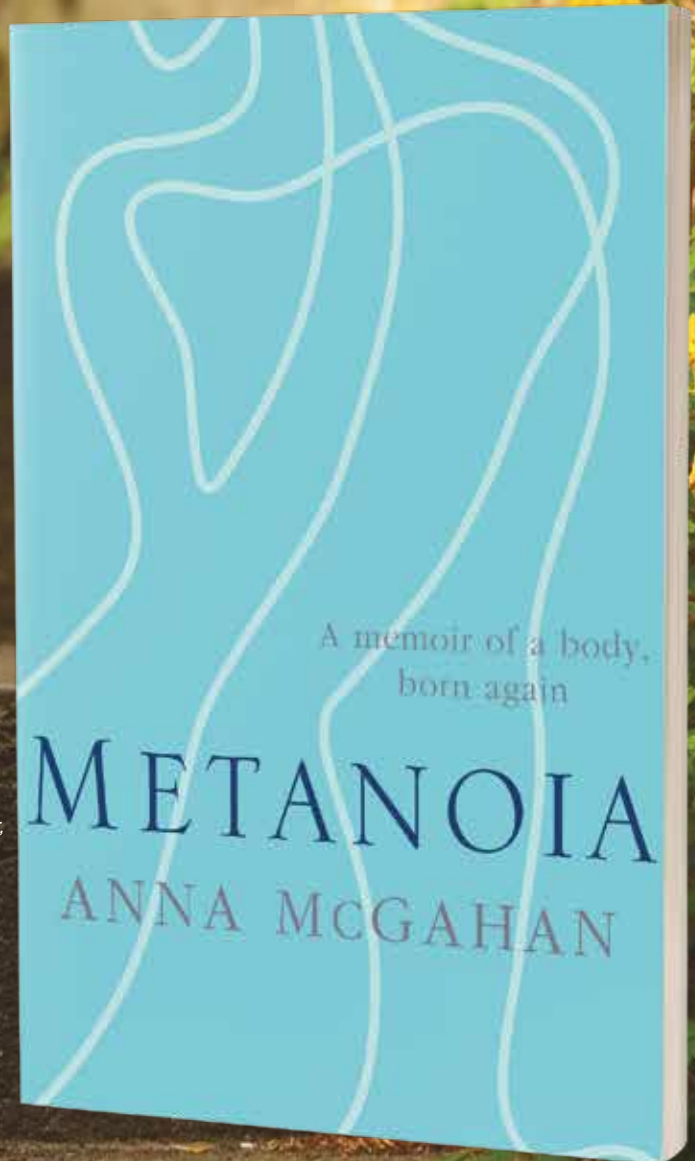
- Stephen Roach -



Anna McGahan is an award-winning actor and writer, who works primarily in Australian television, film and theatre. Anna is passionate about spiritual revival and restoration within the performing arts industries, and founded the Christian artists collective “The Fireplace” in 2015.

Metanoia is the cry of a body broken and resurrected, the song of a bird set free.

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Bible Societies around the world



Under pressure

At the UBS Roundtable in Athens in June, Belinda Faulks, Bible Society Australia's Project and Relationship Manager, was moved by stories of hardship and suffering by leaders of Bible Societies in countries where the church is under pressure. She says this sobering reminder of the harsh realities these colleagues face was also a huge motivation to work harder and do more for these brave colleagues as they work to equip churches worldwide.



Beacon of God's light

A highlight of the Roundtable was the Bicentenary of the Hellenic Bible Society, celebrated with beautiful choral performances (above). The President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, said: "I am here on behalf of the state in order to pay tribute to those who work to spread the word of God. The Bible is a true spiritual legacy. It is a book of cooperation between God and man and that is entirely precious ... It truly is a text for everyone."



Up-to-date Bible

On May 4, Pope Tawadros, the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, opened the renovated Bible World in Cairo. For ten years, its interactive Bible World has taught 60,000 children about the historicity and reliability of the Bible. Children are reminded that Egypt has deep roots in the preservation and translation of the Scriptures. With this revamp of graphics and technology, it will now suit the present and future generations of children.

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